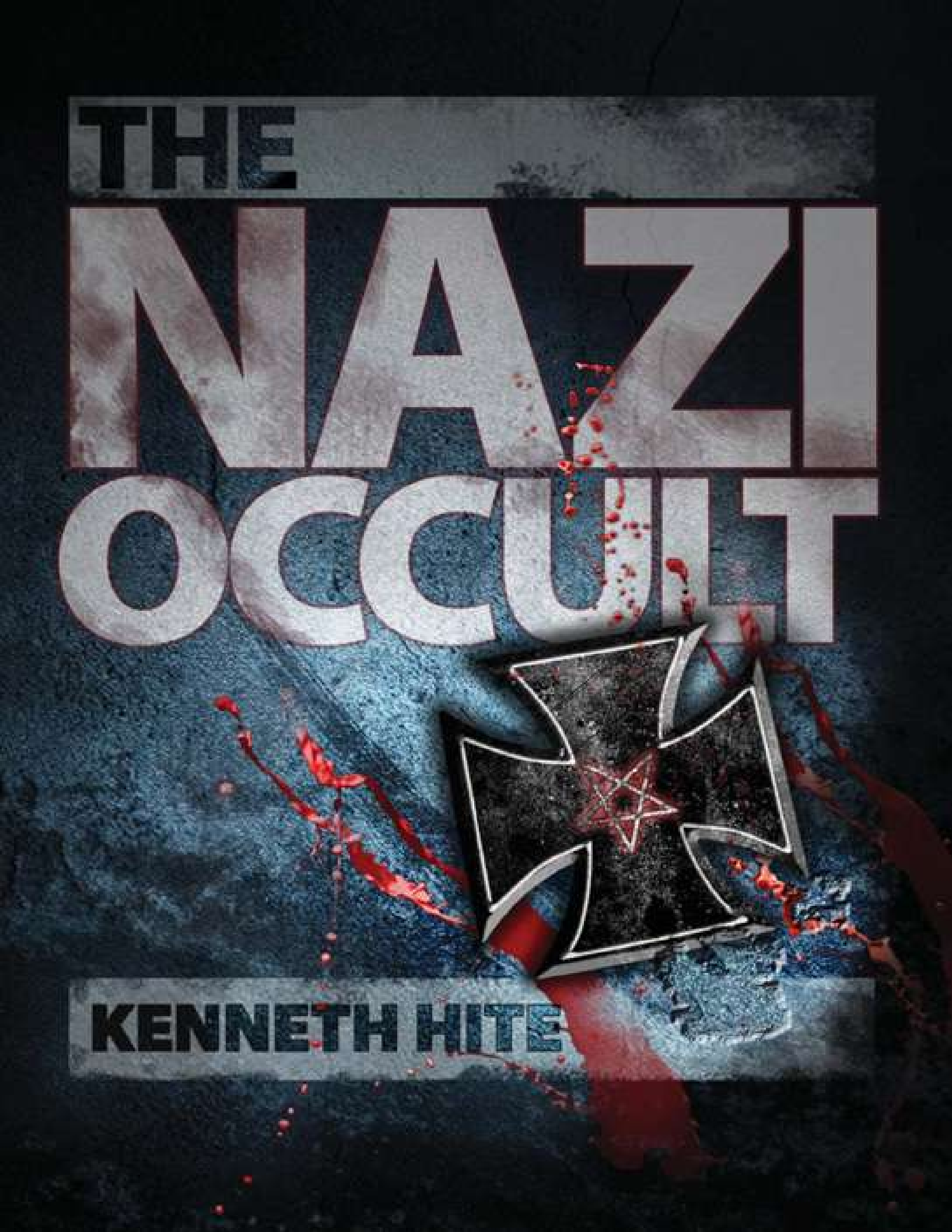
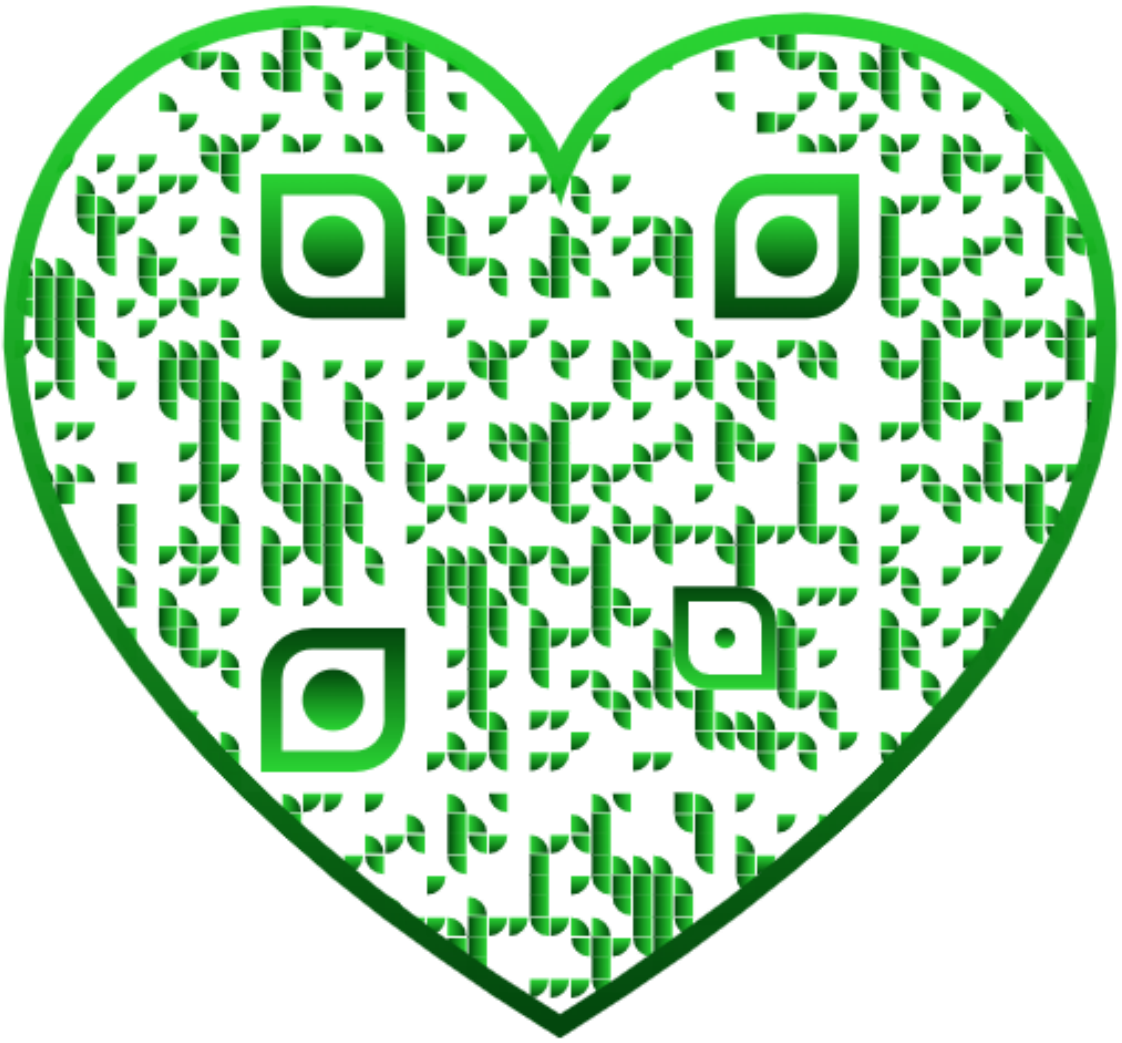
THE NAZI OCCULT



KENNETH HITE



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Introduction

The Nazi occult legend predates the war, coming into its own alongside the Nazis themselves. Various "Aryan mystics" claimed the Nazi Party was predestined, even mythic, but the theory of occult, conspiratorial forces intertwined with the rise of the Third Reich first explicitly appeared in a novel entitled *Les Sept Têtes du Dragon Vert* (The Seven Heads of the Green Dragon; 1933) by a French journalist (and possible French spy) named Pierre Mariel. A number of other French publications elaborated on this theme during the 1930s, culminating in Edouard Saby's *Hitler et les Forces Occultes* (Hitler and the Occult Forces; 1939). That same year, the disenchanted German politician Hermann Rauschning published *Gespräche mit Hitler* (Conversations with Hitler; UK title *Hitler Speaks*) a book describing Hitler's encounters with "the new man" of quasi-Theosophist lore, and his "bondage to … evil spirits." With the outbreak of war in September 1939, the "occult Reich" theory reached the English press in Lewis Spence's *The Occult Causes of the Present War* (1941). The actual business of fighting slowed down such speculations, but the concept re-emerged in Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier's *Le Matin des Magiciens* (The Morning of the Magicians; 1960) and Trevor Ravenscroft's *The Spear of Destiny* (1972), both of which sold millions of copies and spawned hundreds of imitators, all of which reconstruct and emphasize each others' larger claims while contradicting each others' details. This pattern will be familiar to historians in other fields.

This book attempts to synthesize and systematize a history of the Nazi occult. It draws, as far as possible, on the work of serious historians both of the occult and of German intellectual and political history. Where documentation or firm evidence exists, this text does not depart from it. But as the great historian Sir Hugh Trevor-Roper (himself an authority on both Nazism and the occult) observed, writing history is inevitably an act of imaginative reconstruction. In this field, where so little has been uncovered by academic research, imagination – mine or other authors' – is a necessity. Just as the history of some ancient land, where only one or two archaeologists have dug, must rely on myth, legend, and folktales, for now so too the history

of the Nazi occult must incorporate those elements of its mythology most likely to reflect actual events. In some places I have resorted to extrapolation and interpolation; in almost all places I have been required to choose between divergent narratives.

One narrative I can reject. Hitler was not an occultist. He had little patience for Himmler's Ariosophist obsessions, repeatedly condemning them in private conversation and public speech. He despised astrology, although he was willing to use it as propaganda, and was suspicious of all secret societies. His conceptions of race and history were operatic, even mystical at times, but he was no mystic. He was willing to accept Hörbiger's World Ice Theory as legitimate astrophysics, mostly on poetic grounds, but he mocked notions of Atlantis or giants. His beliefs were pragmatic, as befit a street-brawling politician. The Holocaust was not a sorcerous ritual. It was a political mass murder, driven by National Socialist ideology. That ideology was shaped by Ariosophy, but also by the trauma of World War I and by the theories of leading scientists like Haeckel and philosophers such as Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. The occultists who surrounded Hitler, and who took advantage of the suspension of both morality and skepticism in his regime, used those killings for their own ends, but they did not engineer them. They did not have to.

The front page of *Hanussens Berliner Wochenschau* (July 8, 1932)

depicts the horoscope of the Reichstag, showing dangers and mishaps after the end of July, and correctly predicting the Nazi percentage of the upcoming vote. Hanussen also predicted (correctly) that Hitler would not join the government, that the socialists and communists would fail to unite, and that Hitler would not marry the composer's daughter-in-law Winifred Wagner. His final successful prediction in this issue: "The National Socialists will remain at the helm in the foreseeable future. Supported by a robust militia, which is blindly devoted to their leader and highly disciplined, they will continue to field a force of great power. Their commitment and toughness is something the uninitiated cannot imagine." (Mel Gordon Archive)

ERIK JAN HANUSSEN

According to a 1943 US Office of Strategic Services (OSS) report, Hitler took "regular lessons in speaking and in mass psychology from a man named Hanussen, who was also a practicing astrologer and fortuneteller." Erik Jan Hanussen combined stage magic, mesmerism, séances, and the occult in varying degrees during his long career. By 1930, he was holding orgies and magical rituals in his "Palace of the Occult" with high-ranking members of the Sturmabteilung (Storm Detachment; SA). In 1932, he clairvoyantly predicted Hitler's rise to power, earning him at least one meeting with the then-sidelined politician. Various sources say that he trained Hitler in mesmerism, broke a curse put on Hitler by an unknown magical enemy, and volunteered his own services as Director of the Occult in a Nazi government. When Hitler baffled onlookers by becoming chancellor in January 1933, Hanussen seemed on the verge of triumph.

Then, the night before the Reichstag Fire, Hanussen clairvoyantly predicted "a Great House consumed by flames." Suddenly, The Man Who Was Never Wrong became The Man Who Knew Too Much. Hanussen's real name came out: Hermann Steinschneider. The Danish magus was a Jewish fraud! He vanished on the way to a performance; his bullet-ridden body turned up in a shallow grave. On trial, the Reichstag fire arsonist, a simple-minded communist named Martin van der Lubbe, showed every sign of mesmeric control.

The Secret of the Runes

"Only today, now that almost the whole world has succumbed to ape-nature – right up to the Germanic countries which have not been fully spared either – does the truth begin to dawn on us, that we are lacking a certain divine humanity in a general flood of ape-men. But it will not be long before a new priestly race will rise up in the land of the electron and the Holy Graal …"

– Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels, 1905

On Christmas Day, 1907, the defrocked monk Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels hoisted a swastika flag over Castle Werfenstein in Upper Austria. By this symbolic birth-ritual, Lanz raised up powerful energies that would either recreate the primordial Aryan empire of Thule or leave Germany a blasted ruin. Although a practicing mystic, and an assiduous student of the occult, Lanz may not have known just what forces he was unleashing. At the time, his action seemed indistinguishable from the rituals, symbolic concerts, poetic evocations, and other seemingly petty activities common all across Germany and Austria in the three decades before World War I.

Although German nationalism awakened during the Napoleonic period, the German nation spent most of the 19th century in frustrated fragmentation. Following the creation of the German Empire in 1871, romantic German nationalists relieved these frustrations in paroxysms of heroic myth-making about the pre-Roman, "purely Teutonic" past. All over Europe, anthropologists, linguists, archaeologists, and other scholars were piecing together new national histories using the newest tools in their field. Their findings became national propaganda, providing a glorious past and proving their ancestral rights to any disputed territory. Poets, mystics, and politicians alike used these histories to create epics, rituals, and pretexts for national expansion. Again, thanks to the delayed realization of an "authentic" unified German nation, the German expression of these trends was more extreme than most. Also, since German nationalism defined itself in opposition to the invading French revolutionaries, it took on a strongly anti-modern, anti-

Enlightenment character, seeking instead the pure, untainted wisdom of the *Volk.*

By the 1880s, scores of *völkisch* societies existed in Austria and Germany. The word *völkisch* has no specific translation in English: depending on context, the words “folkloric,” “populist,” and “ethnic” could equally apply. These societies studied Germanic mythology, celebrated heroes and legends, and tried to imbue everything from forestry to sing-alongs with nationalistic significance. As Germany and Austria urbanized, and as rival nations began to ally against them, the *völkisch* societies rejected “cosmopolitan” influences and valorized the “eternal struggle” of the German people against Latin and Slavic influence. Their publications and poetry contrasted the glorious fantasy of Germany’s pagan past with the uncertain, dirty reality of Germany’s Christian present. Some sought a renewal of pagan nature-worship, while others merely wanted to purify Germany of all foreign influences.

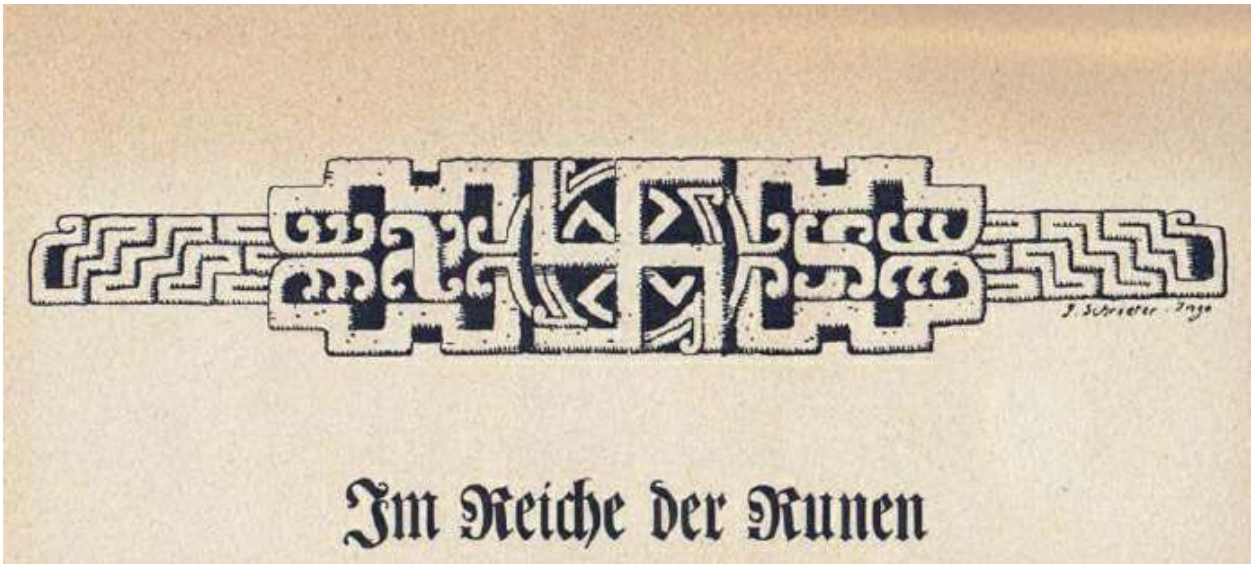
Guido von List (1848–1919), founding father of the *völkisch* movement, is shown here in 1913. By this point, List was devoting his energies to further deepening the connection between Teutonic lore and theosophy in a series of 'Ario-Germanic research reports,' and passing on his wisdom to a secret order of initiates called the *Hoher Armanen-Orden* (High *Armanen* Order, HAO). His primary disciple after 1911 was a fellow reincarnated clairvoyant calling himself Tarnhari, who later became a key member of Dietrich Eckart's circle. (Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-2005-0814-501, photo: Schiffer, Conrad H.)

Guido Von List

Guido List came to the forefront of Vienna's *völkisch* community with the publication of his novel *Carnuntum* in 1888. Fond of long nature walks and an avid sportsman, List wrote primarily travel journalism, spangling his narratives with lore about the pagan past and folk traditions of the

countryside. *Carnuntum* was different: a rousing historical novel about heroic Germans smashing the decadent Roman state and building a pagan utopia. Best of all, List vouched for its accuracy since its events came to him in a clairvoyant vision! The novel's success caught the eye of the pan-German and anti-Semitic publishers Georg von Schönerer and Karl Wolf, who commissioned more fiery works from List.

In the 1890s, List wrote novels, poems, and plays, and lectured about the ancient German religion of Wotanism and its elite and holy priesthood. Searching for details about this hidden and suppressed belief, List began to read more deeply in the occult. He encountered theosophy during this time, and it fundamentally reshaped his views. Founded by the Russian adventuress Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, theosophy blended the Hindu cosmology of cyclic time with a sort of Darwinian notion of competing and changing "root-races." In her books *Isis Unveiled* (1877) and *The Secret Doctrine* (1888), Blavatsky explained that theosophy was a scientific truth expressed in religious terms. Hidden for millennia, Secret Masters in Tibet had revealed "the Occult Science" to her now that mankind was capable of comprehending it.



This illustration, captioned "*Im Reiche der Runen*" (In the realm of the runes), comes from *Geheime Mächte?* (Secret Powers?), a picture book on the history of magic published in 1931 by an Austrian tobacco company. Note the swastikas spinning in both directions; there is no historical difference in usage between "left-handed" and "right-handed" versions of the symbol. (Mel Gordon Archive)

Most significant to List was Blavatsky's revelation that true mankind comprised several different sub-races, all offshoots of the Aryan root-race that had emerged from the Atlantean root-race 100,000 years ago. Of those sub-races, the most recent and elevated was the Teutonic race, which had migrated to Germany from the "City of the Bridge" in Central Asia in 20,000 BC. Other seeming humans were actually descended from other non-human root-races: the Australoid and Dravidian peoples were degenerate Lemurians, while the Mongolian, Amerind, Malay, and Jewish peoples were degenerate Atlanteans.

In 1902, List underwent an operation to remove his cataracts, and was blinded for 11 months. During this time, he pondered his new theosophical learning and meditated on the sacrifice of Wotan, who according to Teutonic myth gave up an eye in exchange for true wisdom. While blinded, his "inner eye" opened, and List had his own revelation: like Wotan, he received the secret of the runes. Wotan's runes were more than just the alphabet used for Germanic inscriptions – they were a secret language of power and their symbolic shapes were the underlying geometry of creation. In 1903, List (by now using the aristocratic "von" in his name) sent a preliminary version of his rune discoveries to the Imperial Academy of Sciences in Vienna. The Academy returned his manuscript without comment, much less publication.

The insult to List became a cause célèbre for the *völkisch* movement. In 1905, a number of supporters, including the mayor of Vienna, signed a petition calling for the creation of a "List Society" to promote his studies. With such backers, List produced more work uncovering the runic influence in heraldry, architecture, and place names. He also expanded his clairvoyant readings of the Austrian landscape, revealing the history of the *Armanenschaft*, the sacred priesthood of Wotan. This priesthood of initiates knew the true meaning of the swastika symbol of the sun: it represented the "invisible primal fire" underlying all creation. Most importantly, the *Armanenschaft* ruled the ancient Germans as benevolent dictators, using their occult powers to protect and expand the homeland. In his 1908 work *Das Geheimnis der Runen* (The Secret of the Runes), List spelled out these occult powers: by a combination of meditation, physical culture (such as yoga), and vocalization, the *Armanen* could re-tune the world to its true runic nature, and change it.

Eine Unheilige Lanz (An Unholy Lance)

Born Adolf Josef Lanz in 1874, Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels proudly signed the List Society petition. He and List regularly exchanged visionary interpretations of the Austrian countryside and theosophical arcana; Lanz coined the term "Ariosophy" to refer to their specific version of Aryan theosophy. Expelled from a Cistercian monastery for engaging in "carnal love," Lanz turned from orthodox religion to mystical journalism. He started an occult magazine in Vienna, *Ostara*, which claimed a circulation of 100,000: its readers included a young art student named Adolf Hitler.

Lanz' magnum opus *Theozoologie* laid out his own visionary discovery, which he buttressed using Gnostic texts and other recondite sources he had uncovered while still a Cistercian monk. According to Lanz, humanity was divided into two main strands. The pure Aryans were god-men ("Theozoa") with telepathic and other occult powers, who came from other stars (or dimensions) and bred by electricity. Sadly, they corrupted their lineage by breeding with beast-men ("Anthropozoa"), who survive to this day both in mixed-blood descendants (the vast majority of humans) and in pure monstrous form. Lanz called for eugenic attempts to breed back to a true Aryan race, essentially the future SS *Lebensborn* (Spring of Life) campaign; and for the sterilization and eventual extermination of the Anthropozoa-descended, prefiguring the Holocaust.

THE SWASTIKA

Depictions of the swastika go back at least 10,000 years. To the Greeks, the Japanese, the Navajo, and many other cultures, the swastika represented fire, fertility, the sun, and the circling stars around the North Pole. It blazoned forth at the court of Charlemagne and in temples to Thor. The word "swastika" comes from a Sanskrit phrase meaning "be well," but in German it was called the *Hakenkreuz*, the "hooked cross." This fit in well with the *völkisch* agenda of altering Christianity and replacing it with proper Aryan paganism.

The French anthropologist Émile Burnouf declared it the soul-symbol of the Aryan race in 1852 and the pan-Germanist Georg von Schönerer adopted it as a *völkisch* symbol in 1879. To List, the swastika (or *fyrfos*, as he called it) represented race fertility, immortal power, and national

return. He added it to the orthodox rune list as a hidden rune concealed between the 17th and 18th runes; it thus also stood for occult energy.

Hence, the Thule Gesellschaft (Thule Society), a self-described "study group for German antiquity," adopted the swastika as its emblem in 1918, and when its erstwhile political wing, the Nazi Party, was looking for symbols, the swastika was close at hand. Hitler took credit for the final design of the Nazi flag (which debuted on May 20, 1920), basing it on a local Party emblem designed by a Thule member named Friedrich Krohn. The effect, as Hitler said later, "was as if we had dropped a bomb."

Járg Lanz von Liebenfels (1874–1954) wearing the monastic robes of his neo-Templarist order, the ONT. In 1894 at Heiligenkreuz Abbey, while still a Cistercian monk, Lanz received an "illumination" at the tomb of Berthold von Treun, a Templar knight. Von Treun's gravestone depicted a knight (or perhaps the prophet Daniel) trampling a writhing dragon, an allegory Lanz extended to deduce an ongoing war between Aryans and subhuman beasts. (PD-US)

To accomplish these vast goals, Lanz revived the medieval knightly order of the Templars, who he believed guarded the Aryan lineage in celibate isolation until the beast-men who ruled the Church destroyed them. Lanz explained that the Templars (whom he conflated with the Teutonic Knights)

sought a “greater Germanic order-state,” stretching across the Mediterranean and deep into the East. To accomplish this goal, they sought the Holy Grail, an “electrical symbol” of the “pan-psychic powers” of the Aryan race. He designed a swastika flag for his Ordo Novi Templi, or Order of the New Templars (ONT), and raised it in 1907. Although the ONT attracted a number of Austrian occultists and *völkisch* enthusiasts, it didn’t accomplish Lanz’ expansive ambitions. Instead, it put on folk-music concerts, held quasi-Freemasonic ritual meetings, conducted anthropological and genealogical research, and founded “utopian Aryan” communities in spots of great natural beauty. It would be another order that actually changed Germany.

The Germanenorden

By *c.*1910, the *völkisch* societies had identified two main enemies of their pure Aryan Germany: the Freemasons and the Jews, who embodied both French Enlightenment ideas and cosmopolitan capitalism respectively. The industrialist Theodor Fritsch, whose explicitly political Hammerbund anti-Semitic movement was going nowhere, decided he needed a counter-Masonry to promote anti-Semitism. In 1911, he recruited the Magdeburg bureaucrat Hermann Pohl to organize this Germanenorden (German Order) along the lines of List’s and Lanz’ researches.

The ceremonies of the Germanenorden blended *völkisch* Wagner with quasi-Masonic rituals lifted from the ONT. Members had to be good-looking, well-off, and pure-blooded Aryans; these requirements slowed recruitment considerably. The outbreak of World War I splintered the Germanenorden, as half its membership found themselves in the trenches. Pohl dithered until a rebellious faction forced his resignation in 1916; he responded by declaring himself the head of a new Order, the *Germanenorden Walvater von Heilige Gral* (German Order of the All-Father of the Holy Grail). He took the seals and other magical regalia of the Germanenorden with him, and started looking for recruits in fresh territory: Munich.

The Thule Gesellschaft

"At bottom, every German has one foot in Atlantis, where he seeks a better Fatherland and a better patrimony. This double nature of the Germans, this faculty they have of splitting their personality which enables them to live in the real world and at the same time to project themselves into an imaginary world, is especially noticeable in Hitler and provides the key to his magic socialism."

– Hermann Rauschning, 1940

It was *Walpurgisnacht* (Walpurgis Night), April 30, the night that witches and dark powers roam the world. On that night, the boundaries between Earth and the Outside weaken and splinter under the assault from demonic forces. That year, 1919, Germany also weakened and splintered: the communists and their enemies the Freikorps (Free Corps) battled in the streets, while the people starved in the husk of their defeated empire. In Munich, the communists had seized power on April 12 after a failed right-wing putsch against a week-old hapless anarchist government. They began cracking down on the wealthy and aristocratic supporters of the old order, and especially on the Thule Gesellschaft. A rejected Thule member had killed Bavaria's socialist president Kurt Eisner earlier that year, and the Thule's newspaper, the *Münchener Beobachter* (Munich Observer), had supported the putsch.

The “sunwheel” swastika was the symbol of both the Thule Gesellschaft and the DAP. It later appeared in various insignia and medals such as SA belt-buckles, collar tabs of Danish and Norwegian SS units, and the Frauenwerk women’s group. (NsMn**)**

On April 26, the Bavarian “Red Army” raided Thule Gesellschaft offices and seized the society’s secretary Countess Heila von Westarp and the Thule membership roster. Working quickly, the communists rounded up six more Thulists, including the society’s co-founder Walter Nauhaus and Prince Gustav von Thurn-und-Taxis, related to every royal family in Europe. Four days later, the communist guards stood the seven Thule members against the wall of the Luitpold Gymnasium and shot them. The royal blood (four of the hostages were titled aristocrats) spilled on *Walpurgisnacht* blasphemously reversed the ancient sacrifice of the sacred king: ritually, the king dies in the fall and is born in the spring to heal the land. The Reds had killed Germany’s sacred king in the spring, awakening the Outer Beings with seven human sacrifices.

Es Werde Licht! (Let There Be Light!) This early (1923) Austrian Nazi Party publication presents a Masonic–Jewish conspiracy, revealing their secret rituals and role in the fall of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Note the Thulist sunwheel in the center of the shield. (Mel Gordon Archive)

The human reaction was also intense: the *Münchener Beobachter* report of the atrocity triggered rebellions all across the city, the insurgents using weapons stockpiled by the Thule for months beforehand. That day, the Freikorps stormed Munich, massacring the communist resistance after three days of fighting. Spearheading the assault were the swastika-bedecked

Ehrhardt Brigade of the Freikorps – and the Kampfbund Thule (Battle League Thule) militia under the command of the Thule's head Rudolf von Sebottendorff, who had been conveniently out of the city during the communist raid.

Rudolf von Sebottendorff

Born Adam Glauer, Rudolf von Sebottendorff took his noble name when he was adopted by the elderly Baron von Sebottendorff in Turkey, where he split his time between his career in engineering and his avocation for Freemasonry, Kabbalah, Rosicrucianism, and Sufi mysticism. Returning to Germany in 1913, he avoided the war thanks to his Turkish citizenship; instead, he fell into Pohl's dissident Germanenorden Walvater. Put in charge of Germanenorden recruitment in Munich in 1918, he and the sculptor Walter Nauhaus established the Thule Gesellschaft as a cover organization. They took the name "Thule" from the mystical northern continent considered by Lanz the original home of the Aryan race. (Lanz called it Arktogäa; the name "Thule" comes from the voyage of the classical Greek navigator Pytheas of Massilia, who encountered an unknown land in the far north around 325 BC.) To drive the point home, they adopted a dagger superimposed on a curvilinear swastika as the society's emblem.

WDT 10/12

On May 27, 1942, SS Sturmbannführer Jochen Seifen-Triebacher died in an attic in Prague while confiscating the library of an elderly Czech member of an obscure astrological order, the Hvězdnatý Moudrostřád. His two SS escorts suffered incurable neurological disorders including hysterical blindness; their broken, disjointed testimony is illustrated here. The fate of the book Seifen-Triebacher was reading at the time of his bizarre death is unknown. Once the sightless, raving SS men managed to summon assistance, the library had been unguarded for several hours; most security personnel in the city were distracted by the (ultimately successful) assassination attempt on Heydrich that day. The bulk of the books were shipped to the RSHA Amt VII B archives; the tome in question may have vanished into Kaltenbrunner's *Projekt Leo* collection in the fall of 1944. Alternately, SS E-IV may have obtained it: the *Laternenträger Projekt* made a number of breakthroughs about that time after the addition of one Hermann Mülder to the staff, a specialist in medieval epigraphy who translated the Central Asian necromantic text the *Ghorl Nigral* for the Ahnenerbe in 1935.

Seifen-Triebacher wears normal SS rank tabs and an Allgemeine-SS uniform with only his cuff band, Ar-rune, and Irminsul badge (indicating advanced magical training at the Externsteine) to indicate his role as an Ahnenerbe UdG specialist. The hard-headed and skeptical Heydrich deprecated the "magical element" around Himmler and was an active supporter of *Aktion Hess.* He did, however, allow Seifen-Triebacher to participate in intelligence operations, and used him to hunt down Czech and Jewish secret societies conspiring against the Reich Protectorate.

Dietrich Eckart (1868–1923) as a young man. His 1912 translation of

Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* changed the hero from an aimless near-vagabond to a fighting superman and became the second most successful play ever staged in Germany. He published Alfred Rosenberg's *The Myth of the Twentieth Century,* a key text in Nazi racial ideology. (Library of Congress)

In the apocalyptic years of 1918 and 1919, solid citizens sought *völkisch* certainties and occult escape: membership increased from a handful of cranks to more than 1,500 seekers. One member was a young law student, Hans Frank, who would later become the Nazi governor-general of occupied Poland. Also a Thule member was the Egyptian-born Rudolf Hess, an eager student of astrology and mystical geography. The *völkisch* and mystical poet and playwright Dietrich Eckart likewise became a fixture at Thule events, as did the future chief ideologist of the Nazi Party, Alfred Rosenberg. The Thule took offices in Munich's Four Seasons Hotel and began laying the groundwork for the overthrow of Bavaria's various left-wing regimes.

In January 1919, Thule members Anton Drexler and Karl Harrer set up yet another front group, this time to build a working-class political bridge to anti-communists and anti-Semites who would be out of place at the swanky Four Seasons. The Thulists called their new group the Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (German Workers' Party; DAP). Its 55th member was a military informer named Adolf Hitler. When Eckart met Hitler that December, he exclaimed in ecstasy, "There is the coming man of Germany of whom the world will someday speak!"

The Eclipse

Eckart and Hitler became inseparable. The poet trained Hitler in stage presentation, diction, and oratory. Some hinted that Eckart also provided instruction in the darker arts of mesmerism and channeling, the mediumistic discipline of inviting spirits to possess the body. He introduced Hitler to rich patrons of anti-Semitic politics, and to the realities of Party infighting. Hitler began to mold the DAP in his own image: he forced out Harrer in January 1920, and renamed the Party the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers' Party; NSDAP) the next month. The divorce was hardly acrimonious, however; Eckart helped arrange the purchase of the Party's newspaper – renamed the *Völkischer Beobachter* (*völkisch* Observer) – from the Thule in December 1920.

And the Thule Gesellschaft did not abandon direct action. It became the

de facto coordinator of the old Germanenorden network and the Ehrhardt Brigade's secret death squad, "Organisation Consul" (OC). In August 1921, OC assassins killed former finance minister and signer of the Treaty of Versailles Matthias Erzberger in a Black Forest spa. The next year, the OC gunned down the Jewish foreign minister of the Weimar Republic, Walter Rathenau, on the summer solstice while the *völkisch* Germanenorden lit bonfires to Wotan across Germany. Rathenau's death may have attracted the attention of Wotan, but it also turned the public against the violent far right. Misjudging the historical moment, Hitler led his NSDAP in an attempted coup against the Bavarian state government without Thule support on November 8, 1923. Swept up in the arrests of Hitler's backers, Eckart went to jail but kept his faith: "It will and must be. I believe in Hitler. A star hangs over him." Hitler's premature putsch was not the end of Hitler, but the Thule Gesellschaft did not long survive it, fading from sight in 1925.

The Thulists and the Erhardt Brigade were not the only mystical *völkisch* militias in the Weimar era. This banner, badge, and book are from the Wehrwolf Bund Deutscher Männer (Werewolf League of German Men) founded in Halle in response to the Allied occupation of the Ruhr in January 1923. By the end of the year, it had over 1,000 members; by 1930, there were 50,000 ‘werewolves’, mostly in Thuringia, Saxony, and Hesse, including a large youth division. (INTERFOTO / Alamy)

By the time Hitler came into the orbit of Thule, Sebottendorff had left it. The society expelled its founder in June 1919, blaming him for the loss of their membership rolls to the Reds. He published an astrological newspaper for several years, then became the Mexican consul at Istanbul in 1924. When the Nazis took power in 1933, Sebottendorff returned to Munich with a new book, *Bevor Hitler Kam* (Before Hitler Came), revealing part of the occult background to the ascendant Party. The Nazis aborted his attempt to restart the Thule Gesellschaft by arresting him and banning his book. In 1934, released from prison, Sebottendorff returned to Istanbul, where he collected a mysterious stipend from German intelligence for the next decade. He disappeared on May 8, 1945, reportedly committing suicide by drowning himself in the Bosporus.

Erik Jan Hanussen (1889–1933) performs a séance in his Palace of the Occult for an audience of Nazi Party officials, German film stars, and Berlin journalists. (Mel Gordon Archive)

Hidden Energies

“The next group was literally founded upon a novel. That group which I think called itself Wahrheitsgesellschaft — Society for Truth — and which was more or less localized in Berlin, devoted its spare time looking for Vril. Yes, their convictions were founded upon Bulwer-Lytton’s The Coming Race. They knew that the book was fiction, Bulwer-Lytton had used that device in order to be able to tell the truth about this ‘power.’”

– Willy Ley, 1947

November 18 is the date of the ancient Aryan festival Ardvi Sura, the holy day of the Persian goddess Anahita, the “Mother of Stars.” On that date in 1925, Rudolf Hess and Rudolf von Sebottendorff met at Hess’ apartment in Munich. Around a table draped in black they, along with the astrologer Ernst Schulte-Strathaus and a young Germanenorden recruit named Conrad Buch, clasped hands. With the lights lowered, they concentrated on the Outside realms. The goal of their séance: to contact the spirit of Dietrich Eckart. Eckart, weakened by morphine and the rigors of channeling spirits with Hitler, had sickened in prison after the putsch and died shortly after his compassionate release.

The medium was a beautiful blonde named Maria Orsic, a Croatian clairvoyant who had left Vienna in 1919. In Munich she ran a circle of *völkisch* young women, the Alldeutsche Gesellschaft für Metaphysik (All German Society for Metaphysics), who wore their hair unfashionably long as a solar rite. She had selected the date and designed the ritual based on her own insights into Aryan lore. This time come around, her head lolled back and the familiar, coarse voice of Dietrich Eckart boomed from her throat: “Follow Hitler! He will dance, but it is I who have called the tune. I have initiated him into the ‘Secret Doctrine,’ opened his centers in vision and given him the means to communicate with the Powers. Do not mourn for me: I shall have influenced history more than any other German.”

Then he announced that he was obliged to open the way for another

entity. A strange, inhuman piping filled the room, and Orsic began scribbling frantically on sheet after sheet of paper. When she fainted at last, breaking the contact, the group examined the writing. Some of it was in a Templar code that Sebottendorff recognized; that portion implied a stellar connection (to Aldebaran or the Pleiades) for the material. The rest was in an unknown script of vaguely Near Eastern appearance. Hess knew reliable scholars among Germany's archaeological and Orientalist community: the "Panbabylonians" who argued that the Jewish scriptures were debased versions of Babylonian and Assyrian stellar chronicles. Hess showed Orsic's manuscript to three Panbabylonian scholars: the Grail poet and philologist Eduard Stucken, the linguist Wolfgang Schultz, and the pan-Germanist, *völkisch* philosopher Paul Schnabel.[1] They confirmed that the language was Sumerian, the earliest known writing, and thus quite possibly related to Aryan runes. Oblique and elliptical, it nevertheless described the fundamental electrical-occult force of the universe: *vril*.

Vril

That 1925 séance became the founding event of a group that went by many names: the Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft "Das kommende Deutschland" (National Working Group for the Coming Germany), the Wahrheitsgesellschaft (Society for Truth), and the Leuchtendeloge (Luminous Lodge) are only some of the ones known to us. (Later writers, simplifying matters, called it the Vril-Gesellschaft, or Vril Society.) The Lodge's public head called himself "Johannes Täufer" (John the Baptist), implying someone close to the Aryan Messiah, Hitler. Using the occult publishers Wilhelm Becker and Otto Wilhelm Barth as cutouts, the group released two brief pamphlets on the nature of the vril in 1930. Apparently they didn't get the response they wanted; the subject dropped out of Nazi discourse.

This may have been because, as anti-Nazi rocket expert Willy Ley pointed out, the word *vril* first appeared in a novel. The Rosicrucian Edward Bulwer-Lytton wrote *Vril, the Power of the Coming Race* in 1871. In it, his protagonists uncover the Ana, a hidden race of supermen inside the Earth. A caste of Ana called the Vril-ya were masters of the "Vril force," an omnipresent cosmic energy combining electricity and telepathy; later readers noticed parallels to nuclear forces also. Soon, the novel hints, the Vril-ya will

expand onto the surface world and conquer the Earth using their vril staves, the least of which can level a city. Bulwer-Lytton's extensive occult contacts led many, including H.P. Blavatsky, to speculate that he had uncovered a genuine truth disguised as fiction. The French occultist Louis Jacolliot claimed he had encountered the vril force in India; the English theosophist William Scott-Elliot revealed that the Atlanteans had flying craft powered by vril.

The Orsic manuscript contradicted Bulwer-Lytton on one point at least. Rather than his "vril staff" device, vril containment and control was more reliable with a spherical shape, or better yet one using cardioid curves. A cardioid curve is best described as the cross-section of an apple without the stem: Emmanuel Swedenborg's angelic devotions, Rudolf Steiner's "anthroposophic" mysticism, and even the original magical mathematician Pythagoras all focused on the apple as a cosmic symbol. Pythagorean magic also stressed the role of sound energy, a topic well-explored by the Ariosophist rune scholars. Acoustic energy-magic, according to some theosophists, had raised the Pyramids and hollowed out the temples at Petra.

Privately published in 1932, Friedrich Wilhelm Raub's *Lebende Elektrogeist* (The Living Electrical Spirit) presents another variation on the vril lore disseminated by the Wahrheitgesellschaft. Raub's book claims the *Elektrogeist*, hidden inside the Earth and radiating throughout the cosmos, is the secret behind Christ's miracles, and the hidden wellspring of Hitler's power. (Mel Gordon Archive)

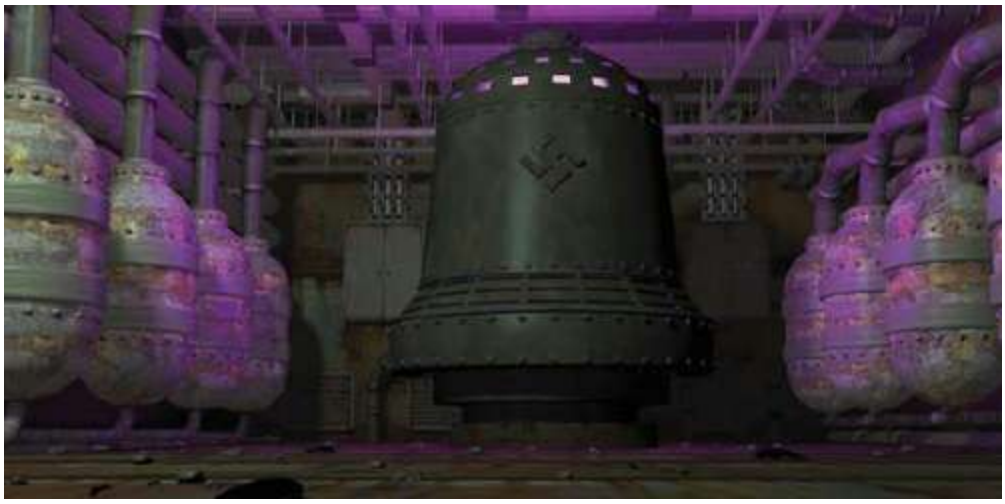
Furthermore, according to a 1931 book by the theosophist writer H. Spencer Lewis, a sub-race of Blavatsky's Lemurians called the Yaktavians

had mastered acoustic energy and used it to hollow out a kingdom underneath Mt. Shasta in California. Their tools were special bells, which the Leuchtendeloge had already determined would fit the cardioid curve of the vril. (Turn an apple upside-down: the result is a bell shape.) Lewis' source for this lore was almost certainly the head of the American "I AM" cult, Guy Ballard, who met with an Aryan secret master identifying himself as "Count St. Germain" (after the legendary 18th-century alchemist) on the slopes of Mt. Shasta in 1930. Ballard was well-connected to the burgeoning American fascist movement of William Dudley Pelley: whether a Yaktavian bell made its way from Mt. Shasta to the Luminous Lodge at this time or not remains unknown. But the Vril-Gesellschaft now knew what to look for. Or, if necessary, what to build.

The Bell and Zero Point

In 1926, the Vril-Gesellschaft recruited the dowser Karl Schappeller. An Ariosophist and amateur engineer, Schappeller had been experimenting with occult magnetism to draw buried metals toward the Earth's surface and to locate the tomb of Attila the Hun. They shared portions of the translated Orsic manuscript with him, and he began research on what he called *Raumenergie* (space energy), the energy field suffusing all space-time. Schappeller's version of vril had much in common with the 19th-century physics of the ether, as well as the theory of "zero-point energy" first promulgated by Albert Einstein and Otto Stern in 1913.

Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler met with Schappeller in Vienna in 1933, and was soon convinced of the military and strategic utility of *Raumenergie*, which could not only power various wonder-weapons but also make Germany independent of outside energy sources. He soon attached Schappeller to the SS Entwicklungsstelle-IV (Development Office IV; SS E-IV), a top-secret program to investigate alternative energy, especially including occult energy production. (Hans Coler's "magnetromapparatus" worked on similar principles, but Coler was snapped up by the Kriegsmarine instead.) SS E-IV continued Frenzolf Schmid's "tripartite ray" experiments in radiesthesia, and also moved forward on Nobel laureate Walter Gerlach's theory that placing mercury under magnetic stress could alter its fundamental nature and unleash cosmic power, a kind of diesel-driven alchemy.



Based on Polish Resistance reports, this modern reconstruction depicts "*die Glocke*," the full-scale (9ft x 15ft) beryllium-steel Bell (replicating Lemurian technology) was built underneath the Wenceslas Mine in Silesia. The violet glow comes from Xerum 525, a radioactive mercury fuel used in two counter-rotating cylinders to jump-start the vril reaction. There is no basis for the reports that the Bell mounted a concave mirror that reflected the past. A UFO that crashed near Kecksburg, Pennsylvania in 1965 resembled *die Glocke*, but was immediately recovered by the U.S. Army before it could be examined by outside scientists. (Artwork by David Winship)

Upon the outbreak of war in 1939, Himmler placed SS E-IV under the physicist Pascual Jordan, at the time languishing in Wernher von Braun's shadow in the Luftwaffe. By 1942 Himmler and Jordan had decided, most likely after considerable behind-the-scenes manipulation by the Vril-Gesellschaft, to attempt the creation of a full-scale Yaktavian Bell, one capable of powering the entire Third Reich. In autumn 1943 construction on *Das Laternenträger Projekt* (Project Lantern-Bearer) began at the Wenceslas Mine, a site in Silesia near the Czech border. The SS invented a cover, *Projekt Riese* (Project Giant), ostensibly the building of a new bomb-proof armaments factory in the mountains, to explain the vast diversion of concrete, steel, and chemicals to the Bell facility.

WELTEISLEHRE

In 1894, the engineer Hanns Hörbiger had two visions that explained the universe to him: he saw blocks of ice stacked on the moon's surface, and he saw a gigantic pendulum extending out to Neptune. From this

epiphany came his *Welteislehre* (World Ice Theory), explaining the cosmos in terms of the eternal struggle between fire and ice. He published his theory in a 1912 tome explaining that ice spiraling inward from outer space created the moon, planets, other solar systems, and the Milky Way. Some planets were back-blasts from ice worlds hitting the hot metallic sun and exploding into steam; others were outer worlds pushed relentlessly toward the sun by the pressure of interstellar hydrogen. The Earth, Hörbiger explained, had captured many icy moons, each of which spiraled toward the planet's surface, broke up, and bombarded the Earth with catastrophic hail. At such times, life retreated to the mountain peaks to be reborn again in the Edenic time before the next moon's approach.

The *Welteislehre* had an instant appeal to the Ariosophists: it explained history in terms of mighty catastrophes and cycles like theosophy, it accounted for the loss of Thule under water or ice or both, its cosmology recalled Norse myth, and it was the product of German thought rather than of the new Jewish physics of Einstein. Hörbiger died in 1931, but his theories had caught fire with Himmler, who added a Hörbigerian meteorology bureau to the Ahnenerbe (see Glossary). Occult archaeologist Edmund Kiss was an avid Hörbigerian; the Tibet expedition (see below) took Hörbigerian samples from Himalayan glaciers. Even Hitler praised Hörbiger, and planned to construct a Hörbigerian observatory in Linz after the war. In 1936, Himmler mediated the Pyrmont Protocol, making Hörbigerian science the official position of the Party.

[1] Stucken and Schultz died mysteriously in 1936; Schnabel had a breakdown in 1937 after contracting an inexplicable case of "malaria."

The Ahnenerbe

"Have the following researched: Find all places in the northern German Aryan cultural world where an understanding of the lightning bolt, the thunderbolt, Thor's Hammer, or the flying or thrown hammer exists, in addition to all the sculptures of the god depicted with a small hand axe emitting lightning. Please collect all of the pictorial, sculptural, written and mythological evidence of this. I am convinced that this is not based on natural thunder and lightning, but rather that it is an early, highly developed form of war weapon of our forefathers … and that it implies an unheard of knowledge of electricity."

– Heinrich Himmler, May 28, 1940

July 1, 1935, was a sunny day in Berlin. Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS and the second-most powerful man in Germany, eagerly awaited his meeting with Hermann Wirth, a Dutch-born professor of languages at Magdeburg University. Wirth was a minor celebrity, to be sure: his lectures on Thule, the Nordic Atlantis, played to packed houses, telling the story of how the Nordic race emerged two million years ago in an Edenic polar continent and settled the world in dragon ships only to fall victim to racial degeneracy and climate change. His dazzling Haus Atlantis in Bremen combined initiatory experiences with archaeological exhibits. Wirth had extrapolated his theories of Thule from fragments of evidence in all disciplines: archaeology, paleontology, geology (especially the wildly controversial continental drift theories of Alfred Wegener), linguistics, and historical records. Wirth wanted to turn the full academic resources of the Nazi state to gathering up more evidence for a past Aryan golden age – and Himmler wanted to help him do that.

The insignia of the Ahnenerbe depicts a sword inside the Odal-rune. The word *odal* means “estate” or “inheritance,” a reference to the word Ahnenerbe’s meaning: “ancestral heritage.” (Krzysztof Zajaczkowski under the Share Alike creative commons license)

Himmler was a self-taught occult scholar. After rejecting Christianity in the wake of World War I, his early reading in spiritualism sparked a belief in continual reincarnation within a single bloodline. (Himmler believed himself to be descended from, and the reincarnation of, both King Henry I “the Fowler” of Saxony and Duke Henry “the Lion” of Saxony and Bavaria.) This particular strain of mysticism melded ideally with Ariosophy and with *völkisch* thought in general, as well as with Nazi racial ideology. Himmler’s devotions to Nazism and to the occult blossomed together, and both fertilized his interest in breeding and purity, further accelerated by his experiences in the Artamanen “back to the land” movement in the 1920s.

This 1508 woodcut by Hans Baldung (called “Grien”) depicts witches engaged in a number of traditional activities including flight, necromancy, and the brewing of poisons and storms. In the 1920s, a new fascination with witchcraft emerged: Benjamin Christensen’s 1922 film *Häxan* illustrated and animated the medieval witch-hunter’s *Malleus Maleficarum,* and in *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (1921). British Egyptologist Margaret Murray postulated that the witch-cults actually existed as a pagan mass religion. Murray’s theory had much in common with Ariosophist notions of pagan survival and echoed the tenor of *völkisch* studies in general. (Lebrecht Music and Arts Photo Library / Alamy**)**

In the Artamanen, he had met Richard Darré, the father of Nazi *Blut und Boden* (Blood and Soil) ideology. An outright worshipper of the old Germanic gods, and a devotee of Nordic racial purity, Darré joined the Party in 1930 and soon headed up its rural outreach program. In 1931, Himmler appointed Darré the head of the SS Rasse- und Siedlingshauptamt (SS Race and Settlement Main Office; RuSHA), initially the body in charge of vetting SS candidates’ ancestry, monitoring their procreation, and arranging their eventual settlement on farm colonies. In 1933, Darré became Reichs Minister for Food and Agriculture. His duties kept him from attending the July 1935 meeting, but he sent Obersturmführer Conrad Buch and four other

subordinates representing RuSHA and the causes of race-purity and paganism in general.

The seven men spent most of the day working out the details of a group that would unify all research into German prehistory, culture, and traditions – explicitly including occult traditions. With preferential access to all academic resources, the ability to mount independent expeditions, and a working ritual research program, the group would be able to recreate fully the primordial Aryan super-culture, and thus recreate Germany in its image, restoring the golden age of the *Armanenschaft*. Himmler and the others decided to add SS resources too and combine a number of pre-existing groups, among them the "Hermann Wirth Society" in Berlin, the Wahrheitsgesellschaft (also represented at that meeting by Buch), and a prehistoric research institute established by the province of Mecklenburg when it elected a Nazi government in 1932. The name of the Mecklenburg office became the name of Himmler's new Aryan research bureau: Studiengesellschaft für Geistesurgeschichte Deutsches Ahnenerbe (Academic Society for Research into the Spiritual Roots of Germany's Ancestral Heritage). Or, more conveniently, "das Ahnenerbe."

Karl-Maria Wiligut

For some reason, Himmler's primary adviser on the primordial Nordic past, Oberführer Karl-Maria Wiligut, was not at that meeting. By 1935, Wiligut was on Himmler's personal staff. At Himmler's behest, Wiligut composed SS rituals and designed SS insignia, including the SS death's-head ring. Despite these signal contributions, he was frozen out of the Ahnenerbe from the first. The most likely explanation is that one of his ideological or political rivals – Wiligut had plenty of both in the Reich's tangled occult infrastructure – blocked his invitation. His rise in the SS had been meteoric: after first meeting Wiligut in 1933 (a meeting arranged by Richard Anders of the ONT), Himmler created the Abteilung Vor- und Frühgeschichte (Department of Pre- and Early History) within RuSHA and appointed him head of it so that "Weisthor" (Wise Thor, Wiligut's new, initiatic name in the SS) could transcribe his insights into the Aryan past for SS researchers.

The Irminsul at the Externsteine at the height of Irminist worship there, as depicted in *Geheime Mächte?* (Mel Gordon Archive)

These insights stemmed from Wiligut's uniquely pure Aryan lineage: he was descended directly from Uiligotis, the son of the Aesir and sorcerer-king of humanity who ruled the world in 228,000 BC when three suns burned in the sky and giants walked the earth. He possessed perfect recall of his various ancestral lives, and of the true Aryan religion, Irminism. He denounced List's Wotanism as schismatic heresy, and promulgated a different set of runic arcana in the pages of *Hagal*, the journal of the Edda Society, which had supplanted *Ostara* among the Ariosophical set. He even had rival occultists sent to the camps, among them the runic healer Friedrich Marby, the rune-magus Siegfried Alfred Kummer, and the List disciple Ernst Lauterer, who under the name "Tarnhari" channeled his own heritage as heir to the Volsungs. Himmler backed Wiligut in all these disputes, trusting to Weisthor's pure blood.

Even after the Ahnenerbe's foundation, Wiligut maintained his own

coterie of researchers within RuSHA. For example, in June 1936, he and the ley-line mapper Günther Kirchhoff spent 22 days deep in the Black Forest uncovering Irminist ruins and power vortexes in the Murg Valley. Kirchhoff used these readings to plot a ley grid of interlocking hexagons linking the Black Forest, Vienna, Giza, Ulan Bator, and Tibet, among other locations of magical potency. In 1937, Wiligut carried out his own magical survey of the Goslar region beneath the shadow of the Brocken, Germany's highest peak and a legendary witches' gathering place.

EXTERNSTEINE

An imposing formation of five natural sandstone towers, the Externsteine towers over the Teutoburger Wald near the town of Detmold. The oldest known evidence of human habitation there is an inscription dated to 1112, when the bishop of Paderborn consecrated a stone grotto as a chapel. However, in 1929 the psychic archaeologist and dowser Wilhelm Teudt identified the spot as the home of the pillar or tree called Irminsul, the legendary soul-symbol of the pagan Saxons. Charlemagne cut down the Irminsul in 772, imposing Christianity on his new subjects: a sore spot with the *völkisch* enthusiasts despite Charlemagne's German nationality.

Wiligut's channeled recollections confirmed Teudt's hypothesis, adding that the Wotanists had defeated the Irminists at the Externsteine in 460. Himmler once more acted on Wiligut's insights, establishing an Externsteine-Stiftung (Externsteine Foundation) under the direction of Wolfram Sievers in 1934. *Völkisch* archaeologist Julius Andrée carried out the initial excavations, but the next year the foundation came under Ahnenerbe control and its work became top secret. The Externsteine became an Ahnenerbe magical "proving ground," where occultists tested rituals and spells. The Irminsul badge of the Ahnenerbe was issued to survivors of such tests.

Wewelsburg Castle from the east. The north tower, center point of Himmler's occult Camelot, is the low round tower on the right. (vario images GmbH & Co.KG / Alamy)

Wewelsburg

The other reason Wiligut might have missed the founding meeting of the Ahnenerbe lay a short bus ride away from Paderborn in Westphalia, near the Teutoburger Wald, where Arminius' Teutonic heroes overthrew Roman dominion. In a vision, Weisthor identified the castle of Wewelsburg as the site of the apocalyptic future battle between the Aryan West and the degenerate East. In November 1933, Himmler decided that made it the ideal spot for the ritual center of the SS and deputized Wiligut to oversee the reconstruction of Wewelsburg Castle.

Measuring approximately 50ft in diameter, the crypt at Wewelsburg underneath the north tower began as the castle's cistern. Bartels and Wiligut remodeled it after Mycenaean "beehive tomb" designs, suiting its necromantic purpose. Twelve stone benches line the wall; niches above held funerary urns or other relics. A gas pipe under the central ring produced an eternal flame. In Himmler's absence, the UdG used this space for goetic rituals at least once (Walpurgisnacht, 1941) invoking (though perhaps not fully binding) a Hyperborean demon. (DC Premiumstock / Alamy)

Previously occupied by the Teutonic Knights, the hill sported a triangular castle built between 1603 and 1609 and formerly owned by the prince-bishops of Paderborn. They tried and executed witches there in the 17th century, charging it (perhaps unwittingly) with occult energies. By 1933, it was a tourist attraction and youth hostel; Himmler leased it (for 100 marks and 100 years) and planned to make it an elite academy for the occult and ideological instruction of the SS leadership cadre. Under Wiligut's esoteric supervision, the architect Hermann Bartels began construction in January 1934.

As Himmler's ever more grandiose plans escalated costs, Bartels switched to using concentration camp labor, initially from Sachsenhausen and then from a smaller camp set up at Niederhagen exclusively for the Wewelsburg work. Nearly two-thirds of the more than 3,000 slave laborers died building Himmler's sanctum. Even then, Himmler spent over 15 million marks on Wewelsburg. An Ahnenerbe archaeologist, Wilhelm Jordan,

excavated relics from all over the region for a museum in the west wing. It eventually included skulls, grave goods, and the 10ft- long fossil of an ichthyosaur: a dragon for Himmler's black knights.

Bartels renovated the north tower (which had been destroyed, save for the walls, by a lightning bolt in 1815) as a center for occult study, moving in a 16,000-volume library of Aryan occult lore, ancient heraldic flags of Henry the Fowler, and other treasures. Specially designed rooms, including the Grail Room, the Aryan Room, and the Rune Room, culminated in a high medieval dining hall. Here Himmler installed a ceremonial Round Table with 13 seats of power circled by 12 hollow pillars recalling the Irminsul. Deep in the crypt, an eternal flame burned at the heart of the SS "Black Camelot."

In 1941, Himmler demolished Wewelsburg's village church to expand his castle complex still further; his builders were still at work in 1943 when wartime shortages forced construction to stop.

Wiligut designed the Black Sun emblem for the floor of the *Obergruppenführersaal* (Generals' Hall) in the north tower of Wewelsburg Castle. Originally, the axis of the Black Sun was a disk of pure gold, intended to mark the mystical center point of the Third Reich. (Germany Images David Crossland / Alamy)

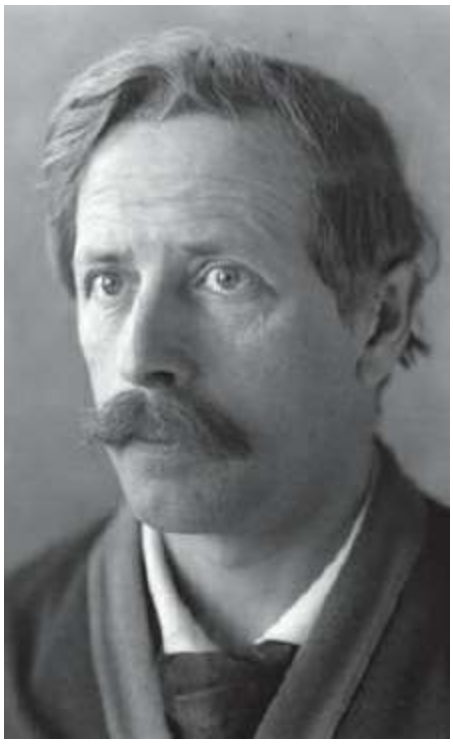
Ahnenerbe Structure

The July 1935 meeting in Himmler's office established the basic command

structure of the Ahnenerbe. Hermann Wirth became the society's president; his personal secretary Untersturmführer Wolfram Sievers took the post of *Reichsgeschäftsführer* (general secretary). Wirth provided overall intellectual and scholarly direction, while Sievers the "*Reichsmanager*" did all the work and directly organized the Ahnenerbe's activities in the field. Himmler reserved the post of Ahnenerbe superintendent for himself, and chaired the society's board of trustees. The Ahnenerbe offices at 29/30 Brüderstrasse in Berlin held seven full-time administrative staffers, an excellent occult library, and a small collection of rune stones. Himmler's paranoia led him to hide the full extent of the Ahnenerbe's reach: Freemasons and other British magical societies had secret chapters in Berlin, and they could not be allowed to find out the truth about the Nazi "Occult Bureau." Most of its work was done in over 50 separate *Forschungsstätten* (institutes) tucked away in SS facilities, university buildings, castles, or research installations all across the Reich.

Some of the Ahnenerbe's more significant institutes, in 1935 and afterward, included the following:

• The Abteilung Ausgrabungen (Excavations Department; AAG) served as an overall coordinator and cadre for Ahnenerbe archaeological expeditions. Originally an independent SS unit, Himmler folded it into the Ahnenerbe in February 1938. Medieval archaeologist Herbert Jankuhn, an expert in the Vikings and the Teutonic Knights, joined the Ahnenerbe in 1937 and became the head of the AAG in 1940. From September 1942 on, Sturmbannführer Jankuhn directed the department from the frontline as Ahnenerbe liaison (and intelligence officer) with 5. SS-Panzer Division "Wiking." His immediate command, Sonderkommando Jankuhn, coordinated excavations and museum looting under wartime conditions.



Hermann Wirth (1885–1981), head of the Ahnenerbe from 1935 to 1937, badly damaged his scholarly reputation with his 1933 translation (as *Die Ura-Linda-Chronik*) of the *Oera Linda Book.* This manuscript, written in Old Frisian, included material (by the goddess Freya herself!) dating back to 2194 BC, the year before the sinking of "Atland," although most of it purported to be a 13th-century chronicle of the Frisian Over de Linden family, hereditary priestesses of the goddess. Wirth accepted that the manuscript was on some level a 19th-century forgery (it was written in medieval script on machine-made paper), but held that the forger had incorporated actual traditions of Germanic myth, runic symbols, and the history of Thule. Himmler met Wirth in 1934, during the height of the academic controversy over the book. The Reichsführer strongly supported Wirth's view, leading some to call *Die Ura-Linda-Chronik* "Himmler's Bible." (ullsteinbild / Topfoto)

• The Forschungsstätte für Indogermanisch-Deutsche Musik (Research Facility for Indogermanic-German Music) studied Aryan musicology, recording folk songs, traditional chants and tunes, and regional dances. Hauptsturmführer Dr. Fritz Bose of the Institut für Lautforschung (Sound-Research Institute) in Berlin led its team of experts in analyzing the runic content of the oldest songs, deriving powerful spells and rituals. To perform them, they built replicas of ancient instruments such as the lur, syrinx, and kantele, often charging them with runic power. The Vril-Gesellschaft paid particular attention to developments in this institute, hoping to harness its

insights for the ongoing Bell project.

1.
2.
3.

1. This figure illustrates field wear for an Ahnenerbe archaeologist in the 1930s. Based on a photograph of future Excavations Department head Herbert Jankuhn, the archaeologist wears sensible garb for digs in hard country: a fedora, belted coat, and high boots. He wears a Luger in a holster for personal security, and holds an idol of the god Wotan uncovered from *an Armanen* burial site.

2. This Ahnenerbe-SS runic sorcerer wears the black Allgemeine-SS uniform of 1936. The hash mark on his right arm indicates Party membership before 1933; he may be an old Thule comrade. In addition to the SS dagger slung at his left hip, he carries (scabbarded over his right breast) an Ahnenerbe-SS *athame*, a ritual dagger used in ceremonial magic. He wears the Ahnenerbe cuff band and the Ar-rune on his left forearm indicating runic training. His shoulder boards (with the Ar-rune for the Ahnenerbe) and rank tabs indicate he is a *Sonderführer*, an officer with special training outside the regular chain of command. He holds his body in the "AR" runic pose as he chants the rune; he holds a copy of List's *Geheimnis der Runen.*

3. This is a *"Hexensoldat"* from Sonderverband Z, seconded to frontline duty in Russia with 2. SS-Panzer Grenadier Division. Like many Allgemeine-SS troops in the field, he wears a field-gray Waffen-SS uniform, although his cap is a pale grey M38 Allgemeine-SS cap with the Ahnenerbe piping color, pale blue (changed from the original maroon in 1940). His collar tab shows the Hagal-rune, officially symbolic of faith in Aryanism, but likely selected as the emblem of Sonderverband Z as the first initial of *Hexe* (witch). He wears *Sonderführer* shoulder boards. His SS athame is scabbarded at his belt; the larger scope of his binoculars contains a crystal for scrying and ley-line tracing. He carries two dowsing rods, used on the front primarily for mine detection, here pointed in the AR configuration to gather magical energy.

SONDERAUFTRAG H

The Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Reich Security Main Office; RSHA), was the SS umbrella group running the security and police services. Its seventh office, Amt VII (Amt II before December 1941), was the written records division, headed initially by Gregor Schwartz-Bostunich, a clairvoyant anti-communist conspiracy theorist who had been initiated into esoteric disciplines by the Armenian mystic G.I. Gurdjieff. Abteilung B (Section B) of Amt VII handled "ideological research and evaluation" against enemies such as Jews, Gypsies, Freemasons, and other banned brotherhoods and secret societies. Amt VII B stored its main library of 500,000 confiscated books in its headquarters, the former Great Masonic Lodge on Eisenacherstrasse in Berlin.

Within Amt VII B, approximately 20 specialists (eventually including archivists removed from the camps) in Referat C3 (Department C3) accumulated, classified, and analyzed every known record of a witchcraft trial in Germany. Directed by Obersturmbannführer Rudolf Levin, this

was Sonderauftrag H (Special Commission H); the H stood for *Hexen*, or witches. Academics and researchers, they never entered combat areas and seldom cast spells themselves, leaving such dangerous tasks for younger (and more ideologically trustworthy) SS men. In 1939, they discovered that Himmler himself had a witch for an ancestor: Margarethe Himbler, burned at Morgentheim in 1629. They uncovered a great deal of the practical "hedge magic" used by the Sonderverband Z (Special Group Z) *Hexensoldaten* (witch soldiers) in the field, while performing odd tasks in conjunction with the Ahnenerbe. For example, at one point Sonderauftrag H worked with Ahnenerbe ornithologists to discover why ravens tended to flock at sites where witches had been executed. (Hermann Göring, of all people, had noticed the connection.) Himmler also wanted his hex-historians to establish a case indicting the Catholic Church for spilling German blood in the witchcraft trials, to counter a possible papal denunciation of the Holocaust. In 1944, to escape bombing raids, Sonderauftrag H removed its research from Berlin to Castle Haugwitz in Glogau, Silesia. Its records mostly fell into Soviet hands.

• The Pflegestätte für Wetterkunde (Meteorology Section) directed by Obersturmführer Dr. Hans Robert Scultetus analyzed and predicted the weather on the basis of Hanns Hörbiger's *Welteislehre*. It also studied and practiced weather magic, to dire effect in 1941. Scultetus' use of Wiligut's rune system instead of List's (thus exalting the Black Sun over List's solar Wotan energies) may have caused the catastrophic wet, cold winter of 1941 that bogged down Operation *Barbarossa* mere miles from Moscow.

• The Forschungsstätte für Runen, Schrift und Sinnbildkunde (Research Facility for Runes, Alphabets, and Symbols; FRSS) served as the central clearinghouse for Ahnenerbe rune-magic research. Wiligut's jealousy of List and of Germany's leading rune-magician Siegfried Adolf Kummer stalled progress in this area for three critical years. In 1942, Kummer was repatriated from Sachsenhausen and added to the staff of the institute, but it was too late. Virtually every major Nazi sorcerous defeat during the war can be traced to faulty runic lore caused by Wiligut's delays and false interpretations.

• The Forschungsstätte für Karst- und Höhlenkunde (Research Facility for Karst and Speleology; FKH) studied not only caves and geological formations, but tales of tunnels and underground realms. Along with the Forschungsstätte für Geophysik (Research Facility for Geophysics), it

investigated remnants of previous moons and the antediluvian giants postulated by the *Welteislehre.*

• The Hügelgrabforschung (Burial Mound Research) group is better known by its nickname Die Todesbruderschaft: the Brotherhood of Death. Devotees of the Black Sun, the necromancers attached to this institute investigated barrows, kurgans, and burial mounds in occupied Norway and Ukraine. Their program to create an army of Nazi zombies never altered the war's strategic balance: undead soldiers remained vulnerable to artillery and had none of the ability to react tactically required in modern warfare. Their tendency to experiment on the Waffen-SS' own dead and dying also led to friction with supporting German units, as in the famous mass-trepanation incident near Nikolayev in 1944.

• The Ueberprüfung der Geheimwissenschaften (Survey of the Occult Sciences; UdG) studied other occult lore besides the runes, especially alchemy and thaumaturgy. Himmler also encouraged the UdG to master *goetia*, the summoning of inhuman entities, believing that the word *goetia* derived from the name of the ancient Goths and that it was therefore ideal Aryan magic. Headed by Sturmbannführer K.R. Krönen, the UdG established and ran Sonderauftrag H (see box).

Other Ahnenerbe institutes investigated such subjects as entomology, fairy tales, heraldry, astronomy, yoga, horse breeding, "zoogeography and animal stories," folk medicine, Celtic ethnography, northwest African culture, and medieval Latin. The cream of their researches appeared in the Ahnenerbe's monthly magazine *Germanien*, which the society published until 1944.

From Wirth to Wüst

Not all of Wirth's Nordic theories met with full Party approval. For example, his research indicated that the Thuata, the inhabitants of Thule, were matriarchal socialists. Wirth's public denunciations of Christianity were embarrassing to the Nazi government politically, and his exhortations to remake Germany in the light of prehistoric Thule contradicted the Party's message that the current regime would restore industrial growth. Wirth's sheer incompetence with money and paperwork led him to the edge of embezzlement, with only Himmler's checkbook between him and prison. The final blow fell at the Nuremberg rally in 1936. In a speech on National

Socialist culture, Hitler denounced "those elements who only understand National Socialism in terms of hearsay and sagas, and who therefore confuse it too easily with vague Nordic phrases … based on motifs from some mythical Atlantean culture."

Himmler was forced to purge Wirth to save the vital work of the Ahnenerbe. He demoted Wirth and prohibited him from publishing and lecturing, ending his career. On February 1, 1937, to cover his tracks further, Himmler renamed the bureau. It was now officially the Forschungs- und Lehrgemeinschaft das Ahnenerbe (Research and Teaching Association for Ancestral Heritage), although everyone still just called it the Ahnenerbe. Himmler replaced Wirth with the renowned (and meticulously professional) Indologist Walther Wüst. Wüst was a scholar of Sanskrit who believed that the *Rig-Veda*, a sacred Hindu text, demonstrated that the prehistoric Aryan invaders of India had come from a Nordic homeland in Germany. Isolated groups of Aryans must still exist in central Asia, he argued, in an echo of Blavatsky's theosophical theory that the Aryan root-race had come from the Gobi Desert. Intrigued by the occult truths Himmler revealed to him, Wüst accepted the position of Ahnenerbe president, but kept his main offices at Munich's Ludwig-Maximilian University.

Under the surface, then, the work of the Ahnenerbe continued, and even accelerated. Its headquarters staff increased to 38, and it moved to more private offices in the fashionable Berlin neighborhood of Dahlem, in a mansion at 19 Pücklerstrasse. The competent, loyal, and silent Wolfram Sievers remained as general secretary, and even received a promotion to Obersturmführer. He won another victory in November 1938 when Himmler's adjutant (and the Ahnenerbe's military liaison) Gruppenführer Karl Wolff discovered the sordid details of Wiligut's past: Weisthor had a record of beating his wife and sexually threatening his daughters.

Worst of all, Himmler's pet clairvoyant had spent three years in a Salzburg insane asylum ranting about the Ku Klux Klan and making patterns with the 6,000 stones he had collected from nearby creeks and hillsides. Regardless of any genuine occult gifts Wiligut might have had, his previous institutionalization made him an embarrassing vulnerability for the Reichsführer, and potentially for the entire SS. Although Wiligut had baptized Wolff's son in an Irminist ceremony in 1937, Wolff knew when to cut the elderly alcoholic loose. In February 1939, he explained to Wiligut's staff at RuSHA that Weisthor's "application for retirement on the grounds of

ill health" had been reluctantly accepted. The SS bundled Wiligut into seclusion in Goslar; Himmler confiscated Weisthor's SS ring and dagger, which he kept in his own office.

Possibly to prevent any more such ugly surprises, Himmler fully incorporated the Ahnenerbe into his personal staff in January 1939, although the bureau did not formally become part of the Allgemeine-SS (General SS) command structure (as SS Hauptamt A) until April 1, 1940. In 1941, Sievers and Himmler established the Darstellende und Angewandte Naturkunde Abteilung (Descriptive and Applied Natural History Division) in Strassburg, Himmler appointing Sturmbannführer Dr. Walter Greite its director. Its goal was to determine empirically the physical nature of Judaism by examining Jewish skulls and skeletons in great numbers.

This ceremonial lamp stand was used in evocation magic (burning various oils and perfumes summoned various entities, or opened the magus up to their communications) and as a runically attuned instrument in other rituals. (INTERFOTO / Alamy)

It took Sievers and Greite a surprisingly long time to assemble their collection – a typhus outbreak in Auschwitz was only one obstacle – but in August 1943 their anatomist, Haupsturmführer August Hirt, began his work. By then Sievers had become director of another Ahnenerbe institute, the Institut für Wehrwissenschaftliche Zweckforschung (Institute for Military Scientific Research), which conducted human experiments at Dachau beginning in May 1942. Dr. Sigmund Rascher, the institute's head experimenter at Dachau, also carried out other experiments for other sections of the Ahnenerbe (including the Todesbruderschaft) and for the Luftwaffe as Germany's experimental aircraft programs expanded.

They weren't expanding fast enough – in August 1943, the increased risk from Allied bombing raids on Berlin forced another move for the Ahnenerbe headquarters. Sievers ordered the Ahnenerbe library moved to Oberkirchberg Castle near Ulm. Many of the Ahnenerbe institutes (and other occult players such as the Vril-Gesellschaft, Admiral Canaris' MFA (see Glossary), Kaltenbrunner's *Projekt Leo,* and the remnants of Wiligut's Irminist cult) managed to reroute vital texts or particularly eldritch tomes to their own headquarters during this process, badly damaging the ability of the Ahnenerbe as a whole to conduct meaningful magical research. The core Ahnenerbe staff relocated to the tiny village of Waichsenfeld in Bavaria, setting up shop in the 17th-century Steinhaus nearby.

Sonderverband Z

In May 1936, as Himmler was laying the foundations for the Waffen-SS, he ordered his adjutant, Karl Wolff (then a *Brigadeführer*), to create and train a military component for the Ahnenerbe. Wolff was well-suited to the mission: a decorated veteran of World War I, a practitioner of pagan Irminism, and an expert at public relations and ideological conditioning. The first mission for such troops would be security. Ahnenerbe expeditions had begun entering dangerous territory, rife with bandits or rival tomb raiders. The second sort of mission for the unit would be clandestine raids to capture valuable artifacts or targets. In these cases, the military commander would decide on tactics, and the civilian specialist assist with target identification and cultural intelligence work on the mission. The third mission Wolff was told to prepare for was actual integration of the Ahnenerbe's sorcerous discoveries into military operations. Ahnenerbe troops would test theoretical magic in battle

conditions and, once the processes were thoroughly understood, act as cadre to train entire SS divisions in magical combat.

The ideal troops for these purposes would be pure Aryans, more naturally tuned to the runic postures and tones of their ancestry. They would be capable of operating in remote wilderness locations, and should at least be open to the possibility of pagan rituals and occult lore. As with most military requirements, in the Third Reich and elsewhere, the ideal personnel were not always available. But by the end of the year, Wolff's staff had combed through the membership records of the various occult and *völkisch* societies, and of the Artamanen "back to the land" groups, and recruited 115 men, including several NCOs from the old Ehrhardt Brigade. (Some of those first recruits were also former SA men promised a fresh start by Wolff after the Night of the Long Knives, Hitler's purge of the SA leadership.) Along with 83 recruits from the other services or elsewhere in the SS and 168 miscellaneous volunteers with promising ancestries (and an interest in avoiding regular military service with the Wehrmacht), Wolff had the makings of a large company or a small battalion. He turned the nascent Sonderverband Z (for *Zauber*, meaning "magic") over to Conrad Buch (who could see the writing on the wall for Wiligut and wanted out of RuSHA) for training and indoctrination, promoting him to *Hauptsturmführer* for the occasion.

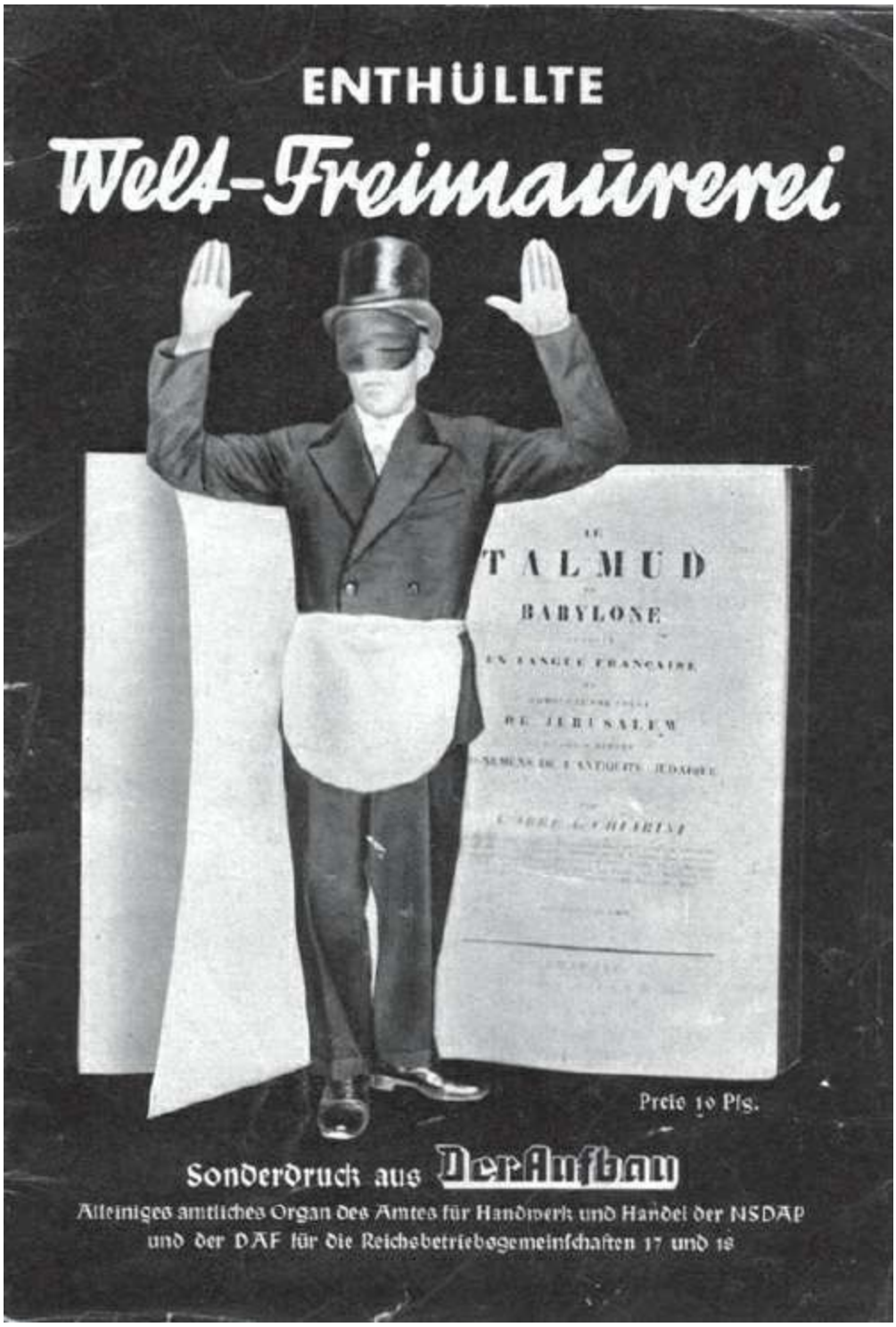
Karl Wolff (1900–84), shown here in 1937, became Himmler's chief of staff in 1933. After the purge of Wiligut in 1938, Wolff had almost total control of SS occult research programs. (Bundesarchiv, Bild 146 - Sammlung von Repro-Negativen)

Born in 1900 in Bad Rappenau in northern Baden, Conrad Buch joined the Germanenorden as a youth recruit in 1915. He served in World War I, receiving the Iron Cross 2nd Class. After the war, he drifted into the Freikorps movement, eventually becoming part of Organisation Consul. After Weimar stabilized, he joined the SS in 1926, eventually rising through the ranks (in the Ahnenerbe after 1936) to *Brigadeführer*. This is the only known photograph of Buch. Taken in 1939, it shows him (rear, between Hitler and Himmler) observing maneuvers, possibly on hand to advise the Wehrmacht on the capabilities of the Sonderverband Z *Hexensoldaten* he had trained. (Pictorial Press Ltd / Alamy)

In the event, the flexibility required for the unit's future missions, and the likelihood that it would be deployed in small teams on numerous simultaneous operations, led Buch to organize his *Hexensoldaten* in three companies with a minimal headquarters staff based out of the Reichsführer's office. 1. Kompanie (Wotan) began with the highest percentage of *geweckt* (Buch's term, literally "awakened" or "bright," for magically aware troops) personnel, and ran through grueling training at top speed to provide support

to key Ahnenerbe missions in 1937. The survivors helped shape training for 2. Kompanie (Donar) and 3. Kompanie (Frô); by the end of the year, 333 men, almost all of them *geweckt* at some level, made up Sonderverband Z. In January 1938 Himmler appointed the commandant of Wewelsburg Castle, Standartenführer Manfred von Knobelsdorff, as commanding officer of Sonderverband Z. A devout Irminist, von Knobelsdorff's primary qualification for the position was his good fortune in being married to Richard Darré's sister-in-law. Even so, Sonderverband Z rune-magic was very effective in the field, especially during the invasions of Denmark and Norway. On some fields, it was less successful, notably at Zerzura in Egypt in April 1942.

Between that disaster and Darré's forced resignation from the cabinet in May 1942, von Knobelsdorff's influence ended, and so did any possibility of raising a larger unit of occult soldiers. After that date, most of Sonderverband Z's *Hexensoldaten* wound up individually seconded to other units as *Sonderführer* (specialist officers), typically dowsing for mines and serving as weather-augurs. A few *geweckt* small units retained cohesion. Herbert Jankuhn brought a platoon of Kompanie Frô to the Crimea with him; they remained with "Wiking" Division for the rest of the war. Wolff secured two platoons of Kompanie Wotan as one component of his headquarters division when he became military governor of northern Italy in October 1943. Some special forces commanders such as Adrian von Fölkersam and Otto Skorzeny managed to attach whole squads of *Hexensoldaten* to their units. When able to reinforce each others' sorcerous skills and cast runic rituals requiring multiple voices, *Hexensoldaten* could contribute materially to the success of conventional actions – and in many actions in the Balkans, their training helped their *ungeweckt* comrades survive monstrous and demonic dangers.



This supplementary pamphlet appeared in September 1938 in *Der Aufbau*, a paper published by Rosenberg's office. *Enthüllte Welt-Freimaureri* (Uncovering World Freemasonry), by Edgar Bissinger, graphically illustrated Masonic practices as a warning to all good Germans. Gregor Schwartz-Bostunich assembled a small museum of Masonic regalia, including coffins full of skulls and bones, in the offices

of RSHA Amt VII B. (Mel Gordon Archive)

Ahnenerbe Expeditions

In addition to magico-military operations and the highest-priority quests discussed in later chapters, the Ahnenerbe mounted dozens of expeditions during its decade of existence. Many of them seemed at the time, from the outside at least, to be nothing more than eccentric or slapdash attempts at archaeology or anthropology. Until 1974, historians doubted even the existence of these expeditions; only in this decade have they begun to study a few of the best-known and most superficially mundane missions. Ahnenerbe correspondence with the Ryokuryūkai (their opposite numbers in Japan) mentions (possibly joint) expeditions to Hawaii, southern Nigeria, and Manchukuo about which nothing more has been uncovered. The Ahnenerbe may have also covertly added staff to expeditions by the Frobenius Institute (an archaeological and anthropological body with a side interest in Atlantis) or the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation; DFG), such as its oceanographic survey of the Cape Verde Islands in 1937–38. (The DFG was ostensibly non-political, but it provided much of the Ahnenerbe's funding, and co-sponsored major expeditions such as Schaefer's mission to Tibet.) Some missions were officially canceled, but then reactivated by the whims of Nazi bureaucracy or carried out under secret conditions. The gaps in the surviving Ahnenerbe records (none of the victorious Allies have declassified all the documents they seized after the war) and the conservatism of conventional historians mean that the full scope of Ahnenerbe activity may never be visible.

Here, however, is some of what can be pieced together of some of the Ahnenerbe's characteristic operations:

This Roman mosaic in the town of Hadrumentum in Tunisia (modern Sousse) dates from the 2nd century A.D. Ahnenerbe scholars in the Forschungsstätte für Klassische Philologie und Altertumswissenschaft (Research Facility for Classical Philology and Antiquity), headed after 1938 by the classicist Rudolf Till, recorded and mapped such swastikas while seeking the Aryan core of Roman occult-imperial geography. (Maciej Szczepanczyk)

• After spending the winter of 1935 researching the origins of Finnish myth, the Finnish folklorist Yrjö von Grönhagen led an expedition to Finnish Karelia in 1936 to gather songs, rituals, and magic rites. Along with musicologist Fritz Bose, he recorded pagan chants and interviewed the prophetess and witch Miron-Aku, stealing her magic for the Ahnenerbe.

• The Ahnenerbe assumed direction of *Projekt Guiana*, Obersturmführer Otto Schulz-Kampfhenkel's zoological and botanical expedition to the Jari River in Brazil. Between 1935 and 1937 Schulz-Kampfhenkel gathered specimens, studied tropical conditions for warfare, and filmed shamanic rituals of the Aparai people. During his time in the jungle near French

Guiana, he also hunted dinosaurs and the lost city of El Dorado, and wrote a report for Himmler on the possibility of creating a new Reich in Brazil with the 1 million German-Brazilians at its core.

EINSATZSTAB REICHSLEITER ROSENBERG

An intimate of Dietrich Eckart and a frequent presence at Thule Society meetings, NSDAP ideologist Alfred Rosenberg had no trouble accepting the role of the occult in Germany's history and future. His magnum opus, *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts* (The Myth of the Twentieth Century; 1930), synthesized Gnosticism, Ariosophy, Grail myth, paganism, and anti-Semitism in turgid prose worthy of any occultist. As "supervisor of intellectual and ideological education," he involved his office in cultural activities, including archaeology and historical research.

At first, Rosenberg's office cooperated with the Ahnenerbe, but as the SS rose in power and influence, Rosenberg became jealous of Himmler's usurpation of what he saw as his rightful province. He recruited scholars and occultists of his own, and competed for digs, funding, and access to overseas sites. Rosenberg had a formal role in the Foreign Ministry as head of the foreign political office, giving him overseas connections he used to advance his agents, men like the archaeologist Dr. Hans Reinerth.

In January 1940, Rosenberg secured theoretical authority over all art and artifacts in occupied Europe from Hitler and set up his Special Staff, the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (Reichsleiter Rosenberg Taskforce; ERR). Confiscating whole libraries from the cities under his power, he assembled his own archive of occult, Masonic, and other works alongside a "Museum of the Extinct Race" holding Judaica from all over Europe. Dr. Georg Ebert managed to capture the Grand Orient Lodge in Paris with its secret and esoteric library intact; it became the core of the ERR Hauptarbeitsgruppe (Head Working Group) Paris. (Other ERR field offices in Amsterdam, Brussels, Riga, Belgrade, and Prague overflowed with similar trophies.) The ERR took over Neuschwanstein Castle in Bavaria as a central clearinghouse for two million boxcars' worth of art and artifacts. Rosenberg's staff, however, was small and unprofessional compared to the Ahnenerbe; key relics slipped through his fingers, and in the field a black SS uniform trumped credentials from the ERR.

As head of the Prehistory Department of the ERR, Reinerth determined to focus his attention on one question: the nature of the Greco-Nordic gods. Were they supermen, giants, psychic beings like the Lemurians, or astral-electrical entities as List speculated? He led another expedition to Cape Matapan in the Peloponnese after the fall of Greece in 1941. His objective was the Gates of Hades, a cavern complex believed in ancient times to communicate with the realm of the dead. Attempting to invoke Poseidon using a runic inscription he discovered there, Reinerth instead entered into communication with batrachian undersea beings dwelling in the Hellenic Trench just offshore. His new insistence that the true master race dwelt in the deeps made him ideologically unreliable, and he was expelled from the Party in 1945.

Alfred Rosenberg (1893–1946) was an ethnic German from Estonia. After the failure of the Whites in the Russian Civil War he emigrated to Munich, where he joined the Thule Gesellschaft and the Aufbau Vereinigung (Reconstruction Organization) headed by Max Erwin von Scheubner-Richter. The latter was a secret society dedicated to the overthrow of the Russian and German governments, linking right-wing German politicians with wealthy and connected Russian exiles to their mutual benefit. Such connections included Henry Ford, who believed in the Aufbau Vereinigung missions of anti-Semitism and anti-communism, and donated heavily to the cause. The Russians added a hearty dollop of conspiratorial and apocalyptic-minded thinking to the Thulist-Nazi brew, but after Scheubner-Richter's death during the

Munich putsch the Nazi emphasis on race rapidly separated the Party from the Russians. (Bundesarchiv, Bild 146-1969-067-10, photo: o.Ang.**)**

• In August 1936, Hermann Wirth and Wolfram Sievers traveled to the Bohuslän region in Sweden, the location of some of Europe's oldest petroglyphs. The involvement of both directors indicated the importance Himmler attached to correct understanding of ancient Nordic runes. Wirth took a complete set of plaster casts of the key runes and then damaged and defaced some of the carvings to prevent later scholars from making the same discoveries. When Wirth was purged in 1937, the Ahnenerbe refused to return his casts.

• While on a trip to Bolivia in 1928, the architect and novelist Edmund Kiss had discovered evidence of primordial Nordic civilization at the ancient site of Tiwanaku. After the fall of Abyssinia to Mussolini, he traveled to the Gondar highlands in 1936 searching for fragments of the previous moon, then to Tanganyika where he meet Ludwig Kohl-Larsen on the shores of Lake Elyasi to examine his discovery of giant skeletons. Himmler sent Kiss on a similar hasty expedition to Libya in February 1939 to narrow the search for the djinn city of Zerzura, but he spent most of his time with the Ahnenerbe planning a large-scale follow-up expedition to Bolivia. The war forced him to scale it back, but in January 1940 Kiss and a picked team of archaeologists and geologists secretly flew to Bolivia, and may have been one of the expeditions that recovered a Yaktavian bell for SS E-IV. After returning from his Bolivia trip, Kiss transferred into the 1. SS Division "Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler," served with Sonderverband Z troops during the invasion of Greece, and eventually reached the rank of *Obersturmbannführer.*

• Iceland may have been the original Ultima Thule encountered by Pytheas in 325 BC. Wirth and Wiligut both believed it to be the home of pure Aryan culture, founded by Nordic pagans fleeing Christian persecution in medieval times. Himmler sent several different agents to the island: Otto Rahn traveled there in 1936 searching for the Grail (discussed in a later chapter), the linguist (and head of the Ahnenerbe's Research Center for Germanic Cultural Studies and Landscape Science in Detmold) Dr. Bruno Schweizer in 1938 looking for pagan survivals and runic landforms, and the linguist Dr. Bruno Kress in 1939 to record Icelandic pronunciations for further runic study. A fourth, ethnological and botanical, expedition (to be headed by Schweizer) in 1939 fell apart in a glare of bad publicity and a

sudden shortage of Icelandic crowns in the SS' coffers.

• Untersturmführer Hans Schleif headed up the Ahnenerbe expedition to the Greek city of Delphi in spring 1937, visiting Troy and Pergamon later that year. An architect by training and a respected classical archaeologist, Schleif gained a European reputation leading the excavation of Olympia that the Nazis funded in 1936 as propaganda for the Berlin Olympics. His orders were to find the treasure of Delphi, lost during the Galatian invasion under Brennus in 280 BC. Conrad Buch accompanied Schleif with a training squad of *Hexensoldaten* and (on the basis of reconstructed runic rituals) consulted the Oracle itself; this may have been the undertaking's real purpose. Later assigned to Ahnenerbe digs in East Prussia, Poland, and Slovenia, Schleif spent yearly "vacations" in Greece until 1944, probably still searching for the Treasure of Delphi.

Before being arrested for political activity in 1905, Ferdinand Ossendowski (1876–1945) mingled with occult circles in St. Petersburg and Paris, meeting Rasputin and the eminent French magus, Papus. From them, he picked up the doctrine of Agartha, described by Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, that he incorporated into his book *Beasts, Men, and Gods*. Between 1921 and 1939, he worked as a travel writer and as a political adviser and sometime spy for the Polish government. He joined the Polish Resistance during the war, and may have used his old occult skills to discover, and then mastermind the gathering of intelligence on, *Das Laternentrâger Projekt*. His death in January 1945 likely aborted an SAC:ST operation to sabotage the Bell site. (2006 TopFoto / Fortean**)**

• Dr. Franz Altheim and his lover Erika Trautmann explored Roman remains in the East for evidence of the Nordic racial core within the Roman Empire. In August 1938 they arrived in Romania to study Dacian fortifications, moving on to Assur and Hatra in Iraq. (Altheim and Trautmann had previously scouted Serbia and Croatia in 1937 while looking for more Nordic-Roman runic petroglyphs.) While there, they also prepared reports and established asset relationships for the Sicherheitsdienst (Security Service; SD), the Nazi overseas intelligence service. Doubtless, other Ahnenerbe expeditions were merely cover for such clandestine operations, or possibly joint occult-espionage ventures.

• Having sparked Himmler's and Wüst's interest with his 1935 discovery of Aryan descendants of Alexander the Great's soldiers living in Kafiristan, the orientalist Inge Kircheisen returned to Afghanistan in 1938. His mission: track down reports of a *vimana* craft (a flying chariot from Vedic myth) hidden somewhere in a remote valley. With local allies (eager to attack British India when war broke out) his team constructed a "weather station" in the Hindu Kush, possibly intended as a broadcast point for vril power.

• The Dutch geologist Dr. Assien Bohmers of the AAG, following his discovery of Cro-Magnon remains in the Mauern caves in Bavaria, toured paleontological sites and libraries all over western Europe in 1938. In December 1938, he was allowed to enter the Cave of the Sorcerer at Trois-Frères, believed by its custodian the Abbé Breuil to contain the first image of divinity or magic ever painted. Bohmers viewed this horned, bestial figure alone, and the Ahnenerbe mined his classified report not only for insights about the primordial runes, but also Cro-Magnon musical instrumentation (horns are painted on the wall of the cave) and the partial skeleton key to lycanthropy.

• In the fall of 1939 following the invasion of Poland, Sievers and RSHA Amt VII head Franz Six prepared a list of crucial archaeological, antiquarian, and artistic treasures to be looted from Polish museums and collections. The Ahnenerbe commander of the mission, Untersturmführer Peter Paulsen, was completely outmaneuvered by Göring's own art expert, Sturmbannführer Kajetan Mühlmann, and by operatives from Alfred Rosenberg's staff (see feature box). Only the unauthorized action of Hans Schleif secured five boxcars full of artifacts from the Warsaw Archaeological Museum for Ahnenerbe study.

• Theologian turned archaeologist Otto Huth was scheduled to lead an

expedition to the Canary Islands in September 1939 to search for ruins of Atlantis or Thule. Huth and Sievers were also interested in reports of blond mummies found on the islands, and the theory that the indigenous Guanches were full-blooded Nordic pagans. Huth's expedition was canceled due to the outbreak of war, but the head of the Spanish General Commission for Excavations (CGEC), Julio Martínez Santa Olalla, used German aircraft and Ahnenerbe specialists in Spanish excavations on the islands between 1940 and 1944. Martínez Santa Olalla also supplied Visigothic artifacts from Spain to the Ahnenerbe headquarters.

• In November 1940, Conrad Buch led a team from the Geophysics Institute and the Indogermanic-German Music Institute to explore Lemurian ruins in the interior of Madagascar, at that time under Vichy French administration. Buch and his team allegedly secured a Yaktavian bell in the stone forest of Bemaraha in January 1941; Buch returned to Germany in March.

• In August 1941, the FKH began sinking shafts into cliffs and caves near the Black Stone of Stregoicavar, considered by most to be a Hunnic victory stele. Himmler believed it to be one of the "world chakra points" mapped by Kirchhoff and Wiligut, and possibly a marker for the entrance to a subterranean empire; according to rumor he ordered an elevator shaft drilled at the spot so he could visit the underworld. The Ahnenerbe site team vanished completely on midsummer night, 1942. Skorzeny sent a heavily reinforced Sonderverband Z squad to the stone during his Hungarian Operation *Panzerfaust* in October 1944 with orders to photograph it, take complete rubbings, and then destroy it with high explosives. No trace of the stone has been found since the war.

• One of the goals of Operation *Barbarossa* was the conquest of new living space for German colonists and settlers in the East. The Crimea, with its salubrious climate, was an ideal target for such colonization. Better yet, according to Ahnenerbe historians it was also the center of a mighty Gothic empire and thus historically German territory. Once Sevastopol fell to the Wehrmacht in July 1942, Himmler ordered the Ahnenerbe to find proof of Crimea's Gothic past and seize any archaeological treasures in Soviet museums, especially the garnet-studded Crown of the Crimea. Sturmbannführer Herbert Jankuhn, accompanied by archaeologists Karl Kersten and the Latvian Baron Wolf von Seefeld arrived in August and followed the 5. SS-Panzer Division "Wiking" all the way to Maikop, where

Jankuhn's *Hexensoldaten* proved their worth in the surprise capture of the city. Jankuhn looted several crates of artifacts (including many Scythian pieces), but the crown (and all the Gothic remains specifically) eluded him. He stayed at the front with "Wiking Division," sending Kersten back to the Crimea to inventory cave cities for Himmler.

Tibet and the Secret Kingdom

“[Hitler] has set us the goal for our generation to be a new beginning – he wants us to return to the source of the blood, to root us again in the soil – he seeks again for strength from sources which have been buried for 2,000 years.”

– Heinrich Himmler, January 1935

On August 4, 1939, at 5:10 p.m., a Junkers Ju 52 passenger aircraft taxied to a stop at Oberwiesenfeld Airport in Munich. Waiting on the tarmac were Heinrich Himmler and Karl Wolff, eager for a first-hand report of the Ahnenerbe’s latest triumph. The propellers stopped, the doors opened, and in his dress-black Allgemeine-SS uniform Hauptsturmführer Ernst Schaefer stepped down to meet his masters. He had returned to Germany despite every bureaucratic obstacle the fading British Raj could throw at him, returned a hero after 13 months in Tibet. In his black-gloved hands he held an idol carved from meteoric iron, fallen to Earth in the Gobi Desert in 20,000 BC – the very place and time that the Teutonic race had begun its migration to Germany, according to theosophical lore. The idol’s Nordic features, Tibetan headgear, and swastika breastplate proved the theosophists correct: Tibet and Germany were two branches from the Aryan root-race that had been born in Inner Asia!

Dr. Mathilde Ludendorff (1877–1966) met General Erich Ludendorff in 1923 and married him in 1926, providing her with a vastly larger audience for her *völkisch* beliefs and conspiratorial theories. She was a devout pagan, seeing Christianity as a Jewish cult, but she also deprecated the occult, which she derived from Semitic and other anti-Germanic sources. She helped turn Ludendorff's personal mass-conspiratorial movement, the Tannenbergbund, into a pagan society devoted to *Gottserkenntnis,* or "God Knowledge." (With 100,000 followers in 1925, it rapidly tapered off in rivalry with the Nazis.) Among her *bêtes noirs* were the Jesuits, the Masons, the Dalai Lama (whom she fingered as the head of the global Jewish conspiracy), yoga and Hinduism in general, and spiritualists. Her 1937 book *Ein Blick in die Dunkelkammer* (A Moment in the Dark Chamber) attacked mediums and the parapsychological researches of Albert von Schrenck-Notzing. (Mel Gordon Archive)

A renowned hunter and ornithologist, Schaefer had been part of two previous expeditions to Tibet, in 1931 and 1934–35 under the American adventurer (and future OSS officer) Brooke Dolan II. Schaefer joined the SS in March 1933, one of the "March violets" who suddenly sprouted Nazi convictions when Hitler came to power. Trumpeting his success in his second expedition, he sought Ahnenerbe support for a planned third expedition under his own leadership. He expatiated on the Aryan symbols he had seen in Tibetan graves, and on the prestige he could bring to German science. After meeting Schaefer, Himmler agreed to sponsor the trip on two conditions: the entire expedition complement must be SS personnel, and Karl-Maria Wiligut

must approve of Schaefer. In May 1937, Schaefer and Wiligut met at the latter's Grunewald villa. In an opium haze, the aging clairvoyant slipped into a trance and began listing, and then describing in detail, lamaseries and sacred places in eastern Tibet, places Schaefer had visited or dreamt of. Schaefer later wrote that it felt as though Wiligut was inside his mind, comparing the experience to the legendary telepathic abilities of the Tibetan adepts.

After that meeting, Schaefer transformed from a cynical scientist hoping to exploit Himmler's Asiatic fixation to a true believer in Aryanist magic. Even the tragic death of his wife in a shooting accident on a remote lake – Schaefer dropped his shotgun in the boat and it went off – could not stop him. (A confidential OSS report suggested Herta Schaefer's death was actually a human sacrifice, much as Agamemnon sacrificed Iphigenia before the attack on Troy.) As he pored over the occult manuscripts and secret research papers in the Ahnenerbe library, Schaefer realized that his idealized "Forbidden Kingdom" of Tibet was only the surface and shadow of the true Forbidden Kingdom in Central Asia: the hidden empire of Agartha.

The Path to Agartha

Agartha was first revealed by Louis Jacolliot, a French colonial jurist in Chandernagore, a French colony in India. In *Les Fils de Dieu* (The Son of God; 1873) he told the story of "Asgartha," the solar capital of ancient India. In his telling, when the Aryans conquered Asgartha in 10,000 BC, its priestly rulers initiated the invaders as their warrior caste. The occultist Alexandre Saint-Yves d'Alveydre showed a different face of "Agarttha" in his *Mission de l'Inde* (Mission of India; 1886). Trained in Sanskrit and in the elder alphabet of Vattanian by a mysterious Indian guru, Saint-Yves described an ancient subterranean kingdom beneath the Himalayas powered by electrical force, ruled by the Sovereign Pontiff. The legend of Agartha went underground for 40 years, surfacing again in the travel narrative *Beasts, Men, and Gods* (1922) by the novelist and adventurer Ferdinand Ossendowski. Having barely survived a civil war in Mongolia, Ossendowski reported that all of Inner Asia was in a ferment, expecting the King of the World and his supermen to emerge from his cavern empire of "Agharti" deep inside the earth. However it was spelled, Agartha was clearly a force to be reckoned with.

While Ossendowski was dodging communist cavalry in Mongolia, another Asian traveler was teaching Rudolf Hess everything he knew. Karl Haushofer, a Bavarian general and professor of geopolitics, had been Bavaria's military attaché in Japan from 1908 to 1910. While there, he had been initiated into the Ryokuryūkai, and possibly met Gurdjieff in China. He also met with the Ryokuryūkai agent Narita Yasuteru, who had visited Tibet in 1901 and contacted the mysterious *eminence grise* of the Tibetan priesthood known as Gyanggu Chhashup Pönpo, or the Man With Green Gloves. Between Haushofer's return to Germany and his service in World War I, he formulated his geopolitical theories of *Lebensraum* (living space) and the crucial strategic position of Central Asia in any coming world conflict. After the Armistice, Haushofer returned to academia; Hess became his assistant and intellectual heir. Hess introduced Haushofer to Hitler in Landsberg Prison in 1923 after the failed Beer-Hall Putsch; whether their talks covered more than global strategy and the virtues of the Japanese military state remains unknown.

The Man With Green Gloves had sent his message west. Another failed putsch sent the reply east. In 1920, the Ariosophical stormtroopers of the Ehrhardt Brigade instigated the so-called "Kapp Putsch" in Berlin, briefly seizing the capital from the Weimar government until they were forced to step down four days later in the midst of a general strike. Their propaganda minister, a Hungarian adventurer, spy, and occultist (initiated into Aleister Crowley's magical Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO)) named Ignacy Trebitsch-Lincoln, fled the ensuing welter of betrayal with a valise full of secret documents. When he surfaced in China in 1925, it was as a theosophical Buddhist lama variously named Chao Kung or Dordje Den. He had made his way to Tibet with the Thule's counter-offer, and it was accepted. During the years between 1928 and 1932, Trebitsch-Lincoln traveled between China and Europe, meeting up with his fellow Kapp-putschist (and sometime Hitler supporter) General Erich Ludendorff, himself converted to runic Ariosophy in 1926 by his second wife Mathilde. Trebitsch-Lincoln moved through all esoteric circles, from the Polaires in France to Hanussen's "Palace of the Occult," his agenda always mysterious. During those same years, reports and rumors flew that the Man With Green Gloves was seen in Berlin – possibly Trebitsch-Lincoln had opened the way for the master to bilocate at least his astral form to the burgeoning sorcerous capital of the West. But some things could only be accomplished by a meeting in the flesh.

Although no records survive of the meeting, SS Hauptsturmführer Ernst Schaefer likely met Gyanggu Chhashup Pönpo, the Man With Green Gloves, on March 25, 1939 in the fabled Black Lamasery somewhere in the Yarlung Valley near Yumbu Lagang in southeastern Tibet.

The lama's dress is speculative, based on that of the Panchen Lama; other reports describe a figure swathed in maroon robes with only green gloves and a "pale, waxy, mustached face" visible. Schaefer wears his black Ahnenerbe-SS uniform; SS Obersturmführer Karl Wienert, at parade rest behind him, remains in the expedition's normal garb. From the cessation of Schaefer's and Beger's reported discussions of the yeti after their return from the Yarlung Valley, presumably there were yeti present at the meeting, perhaps as representatives of the Third Root Race.

SS Tibet Expedition

The Japanese invasion of China in 1937, while welcome to Himmler for racial reasons, blocked Schaefer's preferred route for the SS Tibet Expedition. Now, it would have to enter the Forbidden Kingdom through British India, which meant keeping a lower profile. Schaefer obediently downplayed the involvement of the Ahnenerbe in his mission planning and support, even printing two sets of letterhead (with and without the phrase "under the patronage of the Reichsführer-SS Himmler and in connection with the Ahnenerbe") for his renamed "Deutsche Tibet Expedition Ernst Schaefer." However, Schaefer's agenda and his personnel remained Ahnenerbe to the core.

Along with his cameraman and entomologist Ernst Krause and his technical staff officer Edmund Geer (both SS men), Schaefer selected two other key specialists. SS Untersturmführer Dr. Karl Wienert was the team geophysicist and geologist. A pupil of Germany's premier Tibetan explorer Wilhelm Filchner, Wienert was an expert in geomagnetic mapping. An intensive Ahnenerbe course trained him to map ley lines and other occult forces, and briefed him on the importance of finding the gateway to Agartha. The FKH had been searching for a more convenient opening to the inner world in Sicily and Greece, but some force had apparently closed those ancient conduits of chthonic power. If Germany was to harness vril or ally

itself with a race of advanced Aryan supermen, it would have to make a pilgrimage to the source of life, Tibet.

Himmler selected a section head in Wiligut's RuSHA, SS Untersturmführer Bruno Beger, to be the team's anthropologist and race specialist. Beger's consuming passion throughout his career was the determination of empirical physical differences between the Nordic and Jewish races. In the Himalayas, he measured the skulls and limbs of the people he met, looking for traces of Aryan blood left over from the dawn of mankind. (In 1943, the same urge led him into eager partnership in Sievers' and Greite's program of anatomical mass murder.) He and Schaefer discussed the yeti, that mysterious "Wild Man of the Snows." Schaefer was certain the yeti was an unknown species of bear; Tibet, as the place Ariosophists theorized that evolution began in this aeon, must logically have produced hundreds of species unknown in lower lands. Beger was not so sure; he had also heard it called the *mi-gö*, a name he derived from Aryan roots meaning "the changing horror." Perhaps the supermen of Agartha emerged to kill subhumans in the ice.

SS Tibet Expedition personnel, from left to right: staff officer Edmund Geer, geophysicist Karl Wienert, entomologist Ernst Krause, anthropologist Bruno Beger, leader Ernst Schaefer. (Bundesarchiv, Bild 135-KA-03-076, photo: Krause, Ernst)

Bruno Beger taking skull measurements in Sikkim. (Bundesarchiv, Bild 135-KB-15-089, photo: Krause, Ernst)

The British resident in Sikkim on the Tibetan border attempted to stall Schaefer's expedition, but the explorer would not be hindered by bureaucrats. While in London, Schaefer had met with Sir Francis Younghusband, who had invaded Tibet for Britain in 1906 and 30 years later was promulgating belief in stellar gods who controlled the Earth telepathically. Younghusband had told Schaefer simply to "sneak across the border," and on December 20, 1938, bolstered by a polite invitation to visit a local potentate, Schaefer did essentially that.

Inside Tibet at last, the expedition could begin its real work. Schaefer discussed the power of the swastika and the hateful qualities of British and Chinese imperialism with the Reting Rinpoche, regent for the as-yet unmanifest Dalai Lama. Wienert set about charting the magnetic deformations around Tibet; he spent the party's two months in Lhasa mapping the ley flows to determine the specific global chakra point that would mark Agartha. In a tiny lamasery tucked under the eaves of the Potala, Wienert consulted mandalas and set compasses by a small meteoric-iron idol the monks were surprisingly eager to give up. Beger had his own successes: in addition to many more physical casts and measurements, he managed to obtain a version of the *Kangyur*, the compiled wisdom of Tibetan Buddhism. The copy he received included a black *terma*, dark wisdom revealed by a

Secret Master: specifically, ratios and chants found in the *Cryptical Books of Hsan*, which supposedly predated the destruction of Lemuria.

With Wienert's measurements and the hints teased out of Beger's *terma*, Schaefer led his men to the fortress of Yumbu Lagang, the oldest building in Tibet. Here, the first Tibetan god-kings had descended on a golden rope from heaven and uplifted the sub-creatures dwelling there by mating with them. In these hills, concealed by a vibratory barrier, lay the Hidden Lamasery of the Man With Green Gloves, gatekeeper of Agartha. Schaefer and his team proved their worth by finding the entrance, and the legate of the King of the World welcomed them to his sanctum. No record remains of that meeting; presumably, Schaefer agreed that Nazi Germany would play the role of the ancient Aryan warriors of "Asgartha" long ago: become the earthly army of the Secret Empire in exchange for the power of the gods. In token of this agreement, Schaefer received a *phurba*, or sacred dagger, made from an unknown metal. In Tibetan Bön practice, the *phurba* both represents and controls powerful demons or thought-forms. The *phurba* Schaefer received contained these wrathful energies, penned in a trapezohedral geometry that may have also encoded the true secret of vril. Whatever it contained, it was enough. Less than a month after Schaefer brought it back to Berlin, Germany was at war with the world.

Unholy Quests

“Out of Parsifal I make a religion.”

– Adolf Hitler, September 30, 1923

On April 2, 1938, Adolf Hitler had just entered Vienna in triumph. His homeland, Austria, had joined the Third Reich after a bloodless invasion and a resounding vote of approval. He was returning in power and glory to the city where he had been poor and despised, with only the city’s museums as refuges from the cold of the street. As a young man in the Kunsthistorisches Museum of the Hofburg Palace, he had contemplated the regalia of the medieval Holy Roman Emperors. Today, he gazed upon them again. The crown and sword of the Hohenstaufens remained in their cases, as did the Hapsburg crown jewels. Only one relic had been removed, by a special team of Ahnenerbe custodians who had entered Austria under cover and seized it in the first minutes of the *Anschluss*. Their leader, SS Standartenführer Conrad Buch, now stepped forward and extended the Spear of Destiny to his Führer.

While he was an impoverished failure in Vienna, Hitler had somehow scraped together the money to attend the opera. His first experience of Wagner’s *Lohengrin* had been a life-changing event, and he soaked up as much of the composer’s cocktail of Teutonic myth, racial exaltation, and theatrical power as he could. Hitler was particularly obsessed with *Parsifal*, Wagner’s enigmatic opera about the motherless knight who redeems the Order of the Grail by recovering the spear that left the Grail King Amfortas wounded. Parsifal seizes the spear from the evil magician Klingsor, an act that shatters Klingsor’s power, but must spend years searching for the Grail Castle before he can use its power to heal the king and restore the land. Wagner equates the Spear of the Grail legend with the holy lance that pierced Jesus’ side during the Crucifixion – although he never refers explicitly to Christ in the opera’s libretto.

The Spear of Destiny

The fate of the Roman centurion’s lance that pierced Christ’s side remains unknown. The Lance of Longinus may have traveled to Britain with Joseph of Arimathea, or been passed down as a cult object through the years by secretly Christian legionaries. It appears in hagiography as the Lance of St. Maurice, who used it to rally his legion of martyrs in 286, as the Spear of Constantine, who used it to win the battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312, and as the Holy Lance of Antioch, uncovered during a Turkish siege of the Crusader city in 1098. The fate of those objects is unknown. In more orthodox Church history, the Holy Lance is reported by travelers in Jerusalem from the 6th century; when Jerusalem fell to the Persian emperor Chosroes II in 615 he broke off the spear’s tip and sent the shard to the Byzantine emperor Heraclius. Heraclius defeated Chosroes, recaptured the whole spear and returned it to Constantinople; Baldwin II sold the lance-tip to King Louis IX of France, who enthroned it in his church of Sainte-Chapelle. (The lance-tip vanished during the French Revolution.) The lance in Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453, but Sultan Bayezid II sent it to the Pope in 1492 as a bribe. Ever since, it has lain beneath the dome of St. Peter’s; Hitler never tried to remove it.

Hitler depicted as Parsifal, with the Nazi banner in place of the Spear. Hitler interpreted *Parsifal* as a story of racial, not spiritual redemption, saying: “It is not the Christian religion of compassion that is acclaimed, but pure noble blood ... The king is suffering from the incurable ailment of corrupted blood. The uninitiated but pure [Parsifal] is tempted to abandon himself in Klingsor’s magic garden to the lusts and excesses of corrupt civilization [Kundry] ... For myself, I have the most intimate familiarity with Wagner’s mental processes. At every stage of my life I come back to him ... If we strip *Parsifal* of every poetic element, we learn from it that selection and renewal are possible only amid the continuous tension of a lasting struggle.” (Peter Newark Pictures / The Bridgeman Art Library)

The Spear of Vienna, however, was another matter. The Holy Roman

Emperors held that spear in the Hofburg as a symbol of their ability to rule. Before them, the kings of Germany wielded it, in direct line from Charlemagne. Charlemagne took the spear from the Germanic Lombards when he proclaimed himself their king in 774. At some point in time, smiths inserted one of the nails of the True Cross into the base of the spear; possibly at the accession of Aripert, the first Catholic king of the Lombards, in 653. The royal Lombard dynasty was called the Guningi, meaning "wielders of Gungnir," Wotan's spear; their kings claimed power by grasping the royal lance. In short, Buch may have not intended the gift of the spear as invoking Christian power at all, but as the exaltation and proclamation of a new Wotanist kingship of Germany, and Hitler may have received it in that spirit.

Brigadeführer Ernst Kaltenbrunner, head of the Austrian SS, oversaw the shipment of the spear (along with the rest of the imperial regalia and several additional crates of treasure) to the city of Nuremberg. Nuremberg was not only the cult city of the Nazi movement, it had also been the home of the spear from 1424 to 1796, the spear and the other regalia being moved to Vienna only when it seemed that Napoleon might seize the treasure and whatever occult power it possessed. Kaltenbrunner had the spear enshrined in St. Katherine's Cathedral, where it rested until the RAF bombing raid on Nuremberg of August 29, 1942 damaged the church. (Churchill never commented on the rumor that he targeted the cathedral deliberately to destroy Hitler's sacred talisman.) Burgomaster Willi Leibel transferred the spear to a bank vault, then in 1943 to a tunnel beneath Nuremberg Castle. When another suspiciously well-aimed RAF raid nearly destroyed the tunnel on October 13, 1944, Leibel moved it again, to a cave beneath a school on the Panier Platz.

The Ark of the Covenant

Unlike the reappearing spear, the Ark of the Covenant had vanished completely. Contradictory apocryphal texts suggest that the Ark was carried off to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar or hidden by the prophet Jeremiah, but 2 Chronicles 12:9 seems very clear: "So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house; he took all away." On March 17, 1939, the Alsatian archaeologist Pierre Montet discovered the tomb of the Pharaoh Shoshenq I, the Biblical "Shishak," at Tanis, the capital of the 22nd Dynasty

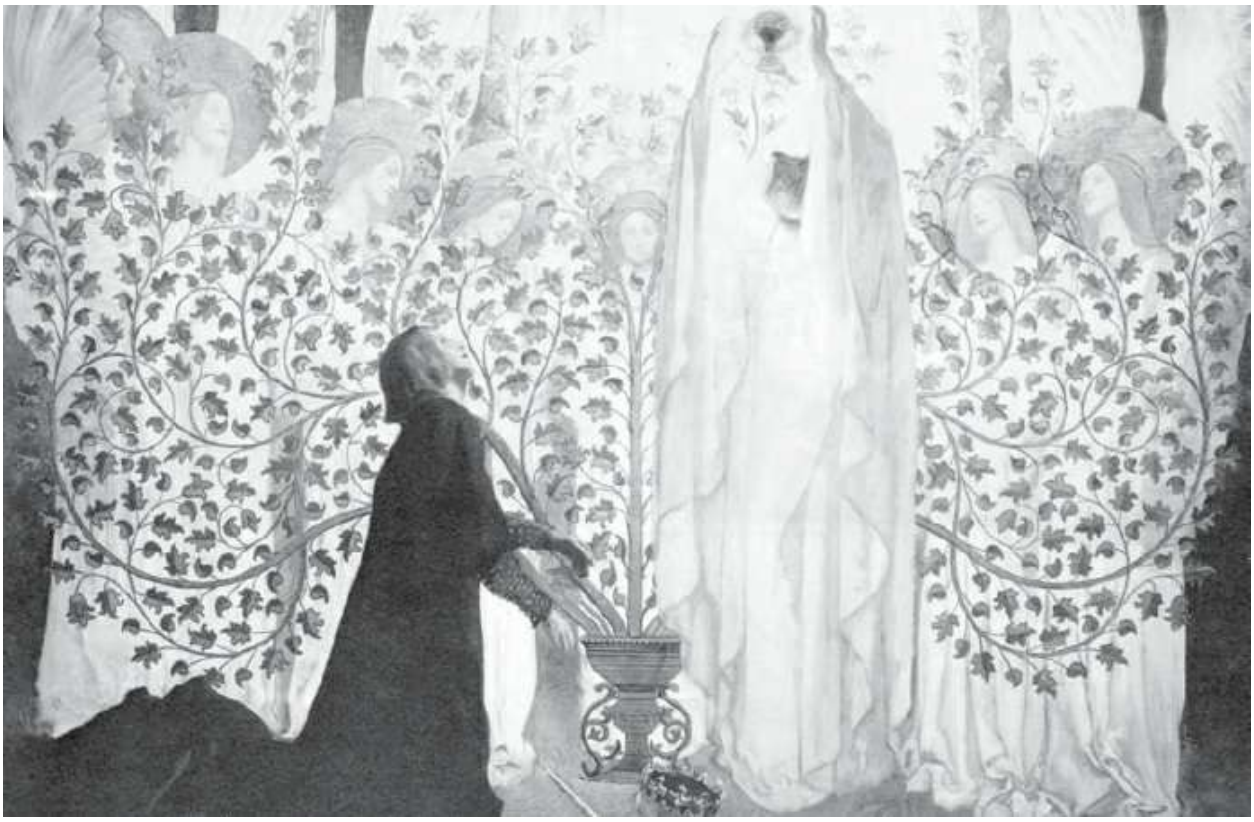
of ancient Egypt. Inside was a hieroglyphic fresco making it clear that the victorious Egyptians had taken the Ark of the Covenant to Tanis.

Montet tried to keep the discovery secret until he could translate the script, but word leaked out in the French occult underworld. Two secret societies immediately sent agents to find the Ark before Montet could: the Polaires and the Veilleurs ("Watchers"). The Polaires had emerged in Paris in the mid-1920s as an "Agarthist" movement inspired by Ossendowski's book and by a mysterious oracle discovered by two music students. Concerned with astral projection, the lost polar continent, and the lost treasures of the Cathars, they wanted primarily to eclipse their rivals. Their former guru, the anti-modernist esoteric scholar René Guénon, lived in Cairo; his occult contacts doubtless brought in the Polaires.

Prior to Montet's discovery, the eccentric American evangelist Antonia Frederick Futterer (male, despite the name) claimed to have discovered the Ark in 1926 in a cave high atop Mt. Nebo in the Transjordan. According to a report by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Futterer received a map to the Ark from "a German specialist recently arrived from Germany." Was this an Ahnenerbe or Veilleurist spoiling operation, or did the "tunnel lined with hieroglyphics" that Futterer discovered hold some other occult truth? (PD-US)

The Alsatian chemist and theosophist René Schwaller de Lubicz founded the Veilleurs in 1919 in the aftermath of the war; their goal was to install a "Synarchist" government modeled on Saint-Yves d'Alveydre's description of

Agartha. Schwaller considered the swastika the operative symbol of society, denounced lower races, and designed a uniform for the Veilleurs featuring a brown shirt and jackboots. He officially dissolved his order in 1922, but it remained active on the French right wing as *La Cagoule* ("The Hood"). In 1928 Schwaller moved to Luxor in Upper Egypt, to interpret its architecture and inscriptions according to his own mystical insights. When he heard about the discovery at Tanis, he called on his old brown-shirted colleagues – who included Rudolf Hess.



This 1895 painting by Edwin Austin Abbey depicts Galahad as "King of Sarras" attaining the Holy Grail. The 13th-century Prose Lancelot describes Sarras as an "island" between Britain and Palestine and places it in Egypt. Other sources conflate Sarras with the mysterious mountain of Munsalvaesche (Montsalvat) mentioned in *Parzival*, and describe it as a mountainous kingdom. One wing of the Ahnenerbe believed that the Grail kingdom of Sarras was the Aryan Visigothic kingdom in the Spanish Pyrenees, especially the region around Saragossa. In October 1940, Himmler visited Spain and with an Ahnenerbe escort toured the mountainside monastery at Montserrat (a potential candidate for Montsalvat) near Barcelona. Whether he sought to confirm or contradict Rahn's placement of the Grail in France remains unknown. (Library of Congress)

Hess had briefly joined the Veilleurs while at loose ends in 1919, but by 1939 he served a new master. He ordered an Ahnenerbe team to Tanis to seize the Ark by force if necessary. The squabbling and infighting of the two French conspiracies, and Hess' insistence on micro-managing the operation from Berlin, created near chaos at Tanis. The American government's Inquiry Group (a team of Middle Eastern intelligence specialists recruited in 1918, with a growing interest in occult matters) picked up Hess' transmissions and sent their own team to Egypt, headed by an archaeologist from Marshall College in Connecticut. After a series of ambushes, firefights, and considerable damage to the dig site (which incidentally prevented Montet from being able to publish his findings), the Ark was in Washington D.C. and Hess' Ahnenerbe team were all dead.

Otto Rahn (1904–39?) in the Grotto of Lombrives in 1931, before he joined the SS. With the resources of the Ahnenerbe, Rahn deciphered the petroglyphs in the Grotto to deduce the location of the Grail. Lombrives is the largest open cave system in Europe, located near Tarascon (another cognate with Sarras?) in the French Pyrenees. Its opening near Ornolac is just 11 miles from the Cathar stronghold at Montségur on the other side of the ridge, and the Lombrives cave complex extends easily twice that distance. (PD-US)

The Holy Grail

In 1929, a young historian named Otto Rahn joined the Polaires in Paris. He was obsessed with the Cathars, dualist heretics whose principality in the south of France the Church extirpated in the 13th century. Believing that they held the secret of the Holy Grail, he used his Polaire contacts to visit a small Cathar community in Montségur, where the Cathars had made their last stand

in 1244. In 1931 and 1932 he explored the area thoroughly, taking hundreds of photographs of various caves and grottos. In 1933 he published some of the results of his research as *Kreuzzug gegen den Gral* (Crusade Against the Grail), a neo-Wagnerian screed hailing the Cathars as a pure-blooded elite destroyed for their beliefs by a hateful alien religion. He hinted that the Grail was, as the poet Wolfram von Eschenbach described it in *Parzival*, a "stone fallen from heaven," and that the Cathars derived their purity from its power.

Even in 1932, Rahn was given to wearing clothing embroidered with the *Sieg*-rune of the SS. By 1935, Rahn was on Himmler's personal staff, working closely with Wiligut at stone circles and ruins all over Germany. The next year, he traveled to Iceland on Ahnenerbe business; in 1937 SS Untersturmführer Rahn published another work of Cathar mysticism, *Luzifers Hofgesind* (Lucifer's Courtiers) and returned briefly to Montségur. That fall, he served a mysterious tour at the old Templar castle and new concentration camp at Dachau; the official story of a "disciplinary action" was obvious disinformation. He spent 1938 researching a new book about Orpheus, who descended into the underworld and returned; that year it also transpired that Rahn had not filled out a racial purity form. A public purge of Rahn would have been too much, given Wiligut's near-simultaneous forced resignation: Hitler might possibly have shut down the Ahnenerbe, or transfer it to Rosenberg. On May 18, 1939, SS Obersturmführer Rahn's obituary appeared in the *Völkische Beobachter*, stating that the expert outdoorsman had died on a low mountain in the Tyrol in March.

This picture of Otto Rahn was taken during his Ahnenerbe service. Note his characteristic archaeologist's fedora. (PD-US)

Otto Rahn knew too much to be allowed to live. But he also knew things Himmler needed, such as the possible location of the Grail. So Wolff turned him over to the Brotherhood of Death to be reconditioned into a proper state of *Kadavergehorsam*, "corpse-like obedience." Then he sent him off to Syria under Foreign Ministry cover (using the name "Rudolph Rahn") to check on the rumor of another Grail discovery near Alexandretta. Wolff decided not to order the Cathar Grail recovered at once: the ongoing circus in Egypt demonstrated what happened when French mystics discovered something. Rahn spent the next four years building his diplomatic cover, liaising with the Afrika Korps on occult matters, and mounting the occasional treasure hunt. When Wolff transferred to Italy, he had Rahn appointed ambassador to Rome. Spurred by the threat of an Allied invasion of France, Wolff sent Rahn to collect the Grail from a grotto near Montségur in March 1944, supervised by the increasingly *geweckt* Otto Skorzeny. After evading a Polaire astral hunting team, Rahn and Skorzeny returned to Berlin with the Grail.

FRATERNITAS SATURNII

In 1925, bookseller Gregor A. Gregorius (born Eugen Grosche) founded a Pansophic magical lodge with, among others, Albin Grau, the set designer for the film *Nosferatu*. After an organizational wrangle with Aleister Crowley in 1928, Gregorius split his followers off as the Fraternitas Saturnii, or Brotherhood of Saturn. Gregorius identified Saturn, Lucifer, and Wotan as a single being called "the GOTOS entity." His new lodge was explicitly "Luciferian," dedicated to channeling astral demonic power from the "sphere of Saturn" through the "gates of the square" using drugs and sexual rituals, even vampirism.

The Saturnians' enthusiasm for the "left-hand path" attracted many magi in the late Weimar sorcerous scene; the rune-magician and dowser Karl Spiesberger was a Saturnian Brother. But Saturn fell afoul of Wotan: the Gestapo seized Gregorius' bookshop in 1936. He fled to Switzerland and then to Italy, only to be extradited by the Salo government in 1943. Sturmbannführer Dr. Heinrich Fesel of RSHA Amt VII (an astrologer himself and former Saturnian Brother) engineered Gregorius' mysterious

release from the Leipzig city jail, possibly as part of Kaltenbrunner's shadowy *Projekt Leo* (see below). In 1945, he became a police constable in Dresden, something impossible without Kaltenbrunner's patronage.

In early 1944, with the Eastern Front near collapse and an Allied landing imminent, Himmler authorized the recovery of the Cathar Grail from Montségur in Vichy France, by then under German occupation. On March 15, SS Obersturmführer Otto Rahn (officially dead for five years) and a squad of Sonderverband Z Hexensoldaten seconded to SS-Jäger-Bataillon 502 rappelled down the side of the 1,200m mountain to enter a subterranean grotto beneath the Cathar fortress. Rahn carried one of the Yaktavian Bells, recovered on an earlier Ahnenerbe expedition to Madagascar, using its vibrations to create a resonant wave within the Grail. Having lowered in pieces and rebuilt in situ an experimental hydrophone to detect echoed responses, Rahn's command rapidly navigated the maze of tunnels and caverns beneath the mountain to discover the original Cathar treasure-house.

Rahn's men wear the Waffen-SS uniform, although with the original Ahnenerbe maroon piping. Many Hexensoldaten, having been trained in knot- and cord-magic, were reluctant to discard parts of their old insignia (which could also be used against them in "voodoo dolls" or other poppet-magic) despite the official change to pale blue.

Pendulum divination goes back to the Romans or before, and even pendulum dowsing over a map dates from at least the 18th century. However, in 1906 the French priest Abbé Alexis Mermet began to use the pendulum to "dowse" harmful energy flows within the human body, setting off a new occult fad for radiesthesia (a term coined in 1930 combining "radiation" and "aesthesia," or "feeling") across Western Europe. Tarot-diviner A.F. Glahn published *Radio der Natur* (Radio of

Nature) in 1925, about the use of the pendulum to detect disease or crime, heal wounds, dowse for metals, or communicate with the stars. He was recruited by the MFA as a pendulum seer and died of heart failure in 1941 after working with Thule fragments from Greenland. (Mel Gordon Archive)

Zerzura

The lost oasis of Zerzura, the City of the Birds, fascinated an elite group of adventurers and explorers based in Cairo in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Called the Zerzura Club, it included many future members of Britain's famed Long Range Desert Group (LRDG), including Ralph Bagnold. Its most exotic member was a gifted pilot and Hungarian count named László Almásy. The son of a noted explorer of Central Asia, Almásy was an initiate of the ONT and, given his interest in mystical Asia and Arabia, possibly aligned with the "Turanian" neo-pagan and racialist wing of the Hungarian Etelköz movement. He was also a spy for the Italian fascist military, charting possible oases and observing British security in Egypt.

With his occult background, Almásy knew that Zerzura was more than an oasis, or even a famous treasure-house. He was familiar with the legends that it had been built by exiled Templars, and was guarded by the fearsome djinn. Its name also evoked the Aryan legend of the Simurgh, the bird who remembered all the ages of the world. Convinced that Zerzura held the key to occult knowledge and power over the entire East, Almásy deliberately misidentified a mundane Egyptian wadi as Zerzura to his adventuring friends. In 1940, after Hungary became part of the Axis, Almásy joined the Luftwaffe and shared his information with the Abwehr. Transferred to Libya with the Afrika Korps, Almásy found himself working with old Templarist comrades in the MFA on a series of secret occult missions in the deserts and tomb complexes of Egypt.

The MFA could not keep the existence of Zerzura secret from the SS forever. Almásy was ordered to provide the coordinates of the true Zerzura to the Ahnenerbe for a Sonderverband Z strike planned for *Walpurgisnacht* 1942. A jealous von Knobelsdorff refused his offer to accompany the venture, to Almásy's good fortune as it happened. Obersturmbannführer Reiner Galt mounted a frontal assault on the City of the Birds after a botched attempt to exorcise its djinn defender. A third of Kompanie Donar were killed or maddened; Galt and his immediate command staff disappeared without a

trace. (In 1961, Mossad special agents found dog tags from Galt's men for sale in Leopoldville in the Congo.) Almásy continued special operations for the MFA, establishing the secret "Dora" airfields in the Sahara that later allowed much of Germany's saucer fleet to escape capture.

SS Obersturmbannführer Reiner Galt's presumptuous assault on the djinn guardian of Zerzura certainly sealed the fate of Kompanie Donar's April 30, 1942 assault on the City of the Birds, probably doomed the whole Sonderverband Z project, and possibly altered the course of the war. Without control of (or an alliance with) the djinn of Zerzura, the Afrika Korps could not outflank the British forces in Egypt; three months later, Rommel's last offensive ground to a halt at El Alamein.

The Sdkfz 250 carries a modified version of Marius Zippermayr's *Wirbelringkanone* ("vortex-ring cannon"), using compressed hydrogen to fire a miniature cyclone at a target. Intended as an antiaircraft weapon, the Ahnenerbe repurposed it as a runic sound-and-air projector: the Odal-rune (representing "blood and soil") "grounds" the djinn, a being of air and fire. The halftrack itself carries standard anti-magic precautions, including mirrors and inscribed scrolls copied from the black *terma* of Agartha; the Ka-, Yr-, and Lagu-runes painted on the Greif provide magical invisibility. The rune-mage (per normal SS practice with the Afrika Korps, wearing a standard DAK uniform with no SS badge except his Hagal-rune tab) summons the djinn with blood poured in the Gibor-rune "arising" pattern and a congeries of spheres.

Aktion Hess

"All influences which might impair or damage the leadership of the people exercised by the Führer with the help of the NSDAP must be eliminated … the deleterious influences of astrologers, seers and other fakers are to be eliminated and suppressed by the State … Not until this has happened, does the state leadership have influence on the individual citizens. Not until then are the people and Reich secure in their existence for all time."

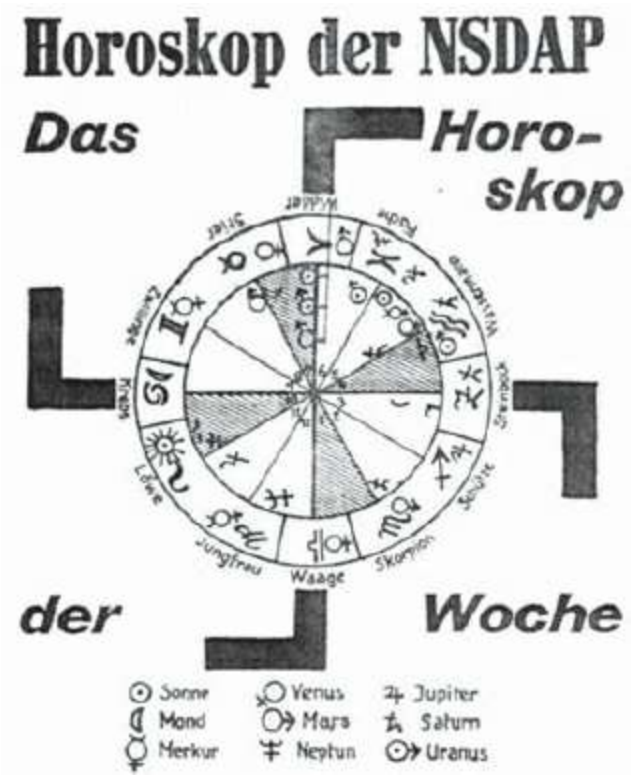
– Martin Bormann, Party Chancellery Decree, June 7, 1941

On the evening of May 10, 1941, expert pilot and Deputy Führer Rudolf Hess climbed into a twin-engined Messerschmitt Me 110 fighter-bomber on the tarmac of the Messerschmitt works at Augsburg. Shortly after 10 p.m., a man calling himself "Alfred Horn" walked up to a Scottish farmer near the town of Eaglesham (south of Glasgow) and asked to be taken to Dungavel House, the home of the Duke of Hamilton. The suspicious farmer called the authorities, and "Horn" was rapidly unmasked as Rudolf Hess. Hitler's propaganda machine immediately declared Hess to have gone insane; British propaganda, on the other hand, did almost nothing to exploit the defection. Hess was locked up in the Tower of London, then transferred to a secret "Camp Z" site in Surrey, and thence to Abergavenny in Wales.

Also on May 10, 1941, a conjunction of six planets occurred in Taurus, coinciding with a full moon. Hess' personal astrologer, Ernst Schulte-Strathaus, pointed out the unique configuration to Hess, noting that it combined extraordinary danger to Hitler with extraordinary potential for world-shaking changes in international politics. The old Thulist Hess decided to take Hitler's fate as his own (why "Alfred Horn" had the initials "A.H."), make a separate peace with Britain, and thus redeem Germany – and Hess' flagging political fortunes. As a gesture of good will, he brought with him an Irish Druidic manuscript, the *Lebor Feasa Rúnda*, which the British magus John Dee had brought to Germany in the 16th century. Himmler considered it a crucial work of runic prophecy, and had had it translated into German by

Dr. Heinrich Thorensen of the Ahnenerbe's Keltische Volksforschung (Celtic Folk Research) institute. Hess, however, took the original grimoire, thinking it might open doors in what he fondly imagined was a still-magical Celtic Scotland.

Instead, it vanished into the hands of "MS," the British occult team that had, as it transpired, helped inspire Hess' flight. Run by Sir Maxwell Knight, who had studied sorcery under Crowley in 1937, MS planted "fixed" astrological information created by their own astrologer Louis de Wohl in periodicals Schulte-Strathaus would read. (A Naval Intelligence officer named Ian Fleming had operational control of "Operation *Mistletoe*," as the occult effort to destroy Hess was called.) Although the Germans never discovered a direct British role in Hess' action, Himmler's rivals quickly pointed out Hess' astrological inspiration. Goebbels issued an order prohibiting the performance, broadcast, or publication of any occult material, confiding prophetically to his diary: "The miracle-men, Hess' darlings, will now be put under lock and key."



Even those Nazis opposed to or uninterested in the occult were willing to use astrology (more popular in interwar Germany than in any other country) as propaganda. In 1923, the astrologer Elsbeth Ebertin created a stir by predicting the failure of the Beer Hall Putsch while saying the

stars showed that Hitler "is destined to play a 'Führer-role' in future battles [and to] sacrifice himself for the German nation." Other astrologers coveted the resulting publicity blitz and tried to score similar coups. This horoscope of the Nazi Party from *Hanussens Berliner Wochenschau* (August 8, 1932) predicts rapid growth and unexpected success, not a particularly daring augury given the enormous victory the NSDAP had won in the July elections. (Mel Gordon Archive)

Hess' successor as Party Chancellor, Martin Bormann, ordered all Gauleiters to consider astrologers – and faith-healers, fortune-tellers, clairvoyants, graphologists, homeopaths, and unlicensed psychiatrists – enemies of the Party and Reich. On June 9, responding to Hitler's fulminations against "astrological cliques" and "stargazers," the Gestapo swept over Germany, arresting hundreds of astrologers and fortune-tellers in the appropriately-named *Aktion Hess*. Schulte-Strathaus had been arrested in May; a month later Himmler's personal astrologer, Wilhelm Wulff, was tossed into Fühlsbuttel. Even the astrologer Karl Krafft, who had predicted the Burgerbraukeller assassination attempt on Hitler in 1939 and was busily rewriting Nostradamus' prophecies for Goebbels' own Propaganda Ministry, was not immune. The Gestapo arrested him on June 12 and sent him to the camp at Oranienburg, where he died in 1945.

Unfavorable Conjunctions

The *Aktion Hess* was not the first Nazi clampdown on rival cults. In 1934, the Reich passed an anti-witchcraft law. That same year, as part of the Röhm purge, fortune-tellers were banned in Berlin due to Röhm's friendship with the astrologer Karl-Günther Heimsoth. Sebottendorff's brief resurfacing that year reminded Himmler just how many occult skeletons were in the Party's closet: the Gestapo put *völkisch* groups and leaders on watch lists and ran many old runic agitators out of Germany.

The Nazis had long considered Freemasonry a special threat to their new order: it represented bourgeois society, Christianity, and egalitarianism, all wrapped in a secret society with tendrils everywhere. In *Mein Kampf,* Hitler identified Freemasonry as one of the many modern institutions totally corrupted by the Jews. In 1935, he ordered the complete dissolution of the order and any other society organized in lodges and the confiscation of all lodges, manuals, and materials. This edict especially applied to magical societies: Karl Germer, head of the OTO, was thrown into Esterwegen

despite (or perhaps because of) his declaration that Hitler was Crowley's "magickal son."

By 1934, the tide had turned against the astrologers. Their attempt to create a pro-Nazi astrological congress had disintegrated into personal feuds and vendettas, while the Röhm purge ended the Party's use of astrology for propaganda. Published that year, Mathilde Ludendorff's pamphlet *Der Trug der Astrologie* (The Burden of Astrology) fit the times, denouncing astrologers as charlatans and enemies of the state. (Mel Gordon Archive)

The Gestapo continued its hunt for underground magical orders, confiscating occult libraries by the yard and sending them back to RSHA Amt VII B. A few groups protected by one or another influential patron continued to publish. Werner von Bülow ran his Edda Society until 1939, Lanz' writings were not banned until October 1941 in the aftermath of *Aktion Hess*, and the ONT continued working and meeting until finally suppressed by Heydrich in March 1942.

The Pendulum Swings Back

But nothing lasts forever. On his deathbed, Heydrich cleared Herbert Backe, the Minister for Food – and a member of the neo-pagan Skald Order – of disloyalty. In March 1942, Himmler ordered Wilhelm Wulff freed from the camps; Wulff went to work for the MFA, most likely as an SS inside man in the Abwehr's occult office. During the urgent search for Mussolini in August 1943, Himmler brought Wulff back into the SS, doubtless believing that the prestige of a successful operation would outweigh blowing Wulff's cover, such as it was.

The hunt for Mussolini was too important for the bureaucratic, academic Ahnenerbe. Himmler cloned the MFA and put Walter Schellenberg, the head of the SS' foreign intelligence division SD-Ausland, in charge of this new unit. In addition to Wulff, Himmler gave Schellenberg the authority to free any other occultists or diviners from the camps. Finally, Himmler loaned the new task-force his personal dowser, an old Thule comrade named Dr. Wilhelm Gutberlet. Gutberlet, the "Master of the Sidereal Pendulum," could divine the exact degree of Jewish blood in any person; he and Hitler were personal acquaintances. He headed a pendulum-dowsing team modeled on Roeder's Pendulum-Institut, substituting Kirchhoff's ley maps for Muck's Thule fragments. Both Gutberlet and Wulff correctly pinpointed the island of Ponza as Mussolini's prison, but the Italians moved him before Schellenberg could act on their intelligence.

THE MARINEFORSCHUNGSABTEILUNG

Admiral Canaris established the Marineforschungs-abteilung (Naval Research Institute; MFA) as a secret office of the Abwehr devoted to

unconventional reconnaissance methodology. Its initial missions were theft of British radar and sonar secrets, and the deployment of concealed weather stations in the North Atlantic. Headed by Otto Friedrich Muck (who invented the submarine snorkel in 1942), MFA employed a number of Thulist mystics as part of its general concern with Arctic matters, but did not prioritize occult researches until a series of events in 1938 surfaced coincidentally.

The first was a March 1938 contact with the astronomer and astrologer Wilhelm Hartmann of Nuremberg Observatory, a member of the Vril-Gesellschaft who demonstrated the possibility of harnessing comets by electrical force. Then in May came the report of Untersturmführer Paul Birkert, who had led a meteorological and geological expedition to Greenland in August 1937 after the Ahnenerbe rejected his proposal. He described Eskimo angakoks who could accurately describe conditions in the South Pacific in their dreams, and he returned with artifacts taken from fortress walls crushed by glacial ice – relics of Thule itself. These relics matched material from the Von Lorfmon expedition to the Cape Verde Islands in 1912, and from the wreckage of U-29, lost in 1917 and salvaged by an expedition to the Azores in October 1938. These three widely separated finds convinced Muck of Thule's reality. In 1940 after the fall of Norway, the MFA pushed for a sorcerous and meteorological station on Spitsbergen, another likely Thule remnant in the Arctic. In September 1943, just such a team landed on Hopen Island under cover of Operation *Zitronella;* it included at least one *Hexensoldat,* a veteran of the Navy's Brandenburger special forces.

During the battle of the Atlantic, the MFA (now commanded by Fregattenkapitän Hans A. Roeder) kept a house full of pendulum dowsers and astrologers in Admiral-von-Schroeder-Strasse, near Abwehr headquarters. By swinging a special pendulum of Thule material over a map of the Atlantic, a trained dowser could locate Allied shipping. The seers (such as the Tarot-diviner A.F. Glahn) who used the techniques derived from the Greenland Eskimo shamans had a much higher success rate, but died or went insane at an alarming rate. The Pendulum-Institut's star diviner, the elderly Ludwig Straniak, nearly died of a stroke during the cruise of the *Bismarck.* In 1943, Roeder moved the Pendulum-Institut to the island of Sylt off Schleswig-Holstein, likely to keep his astrologers out of the clutches of the SS. In September 1942, Canaris moved the

MFA from the Abwehr to a billet under the larger Kriegsmarine Amtsgruppe Forschung, Erfindungs- und Patentwesen (Navy Office Group Research, Inventions, and Patents; FEP), possibly to disguise it from bureaucratic SS poaching. This proved prescient when Ernst Kaltenbrunner purged Canaris' Abwehr completely after July 1944.

Projekt Leo

It may have been Schellenberg's report that spurred the last major occult initiative in the Third Reich, or it may have been something more intimate. In early 1943, just before the creation of the Schellenberg Amt, his superior officer, RSHA head Ernst Kaltenbrunner, took a new mistress. The girl in question was the Countess Gisela von Westarp, the niece of Heila von Westarp, the Thule Gesellschaft secretary martyred in 1919. In late August 1943 Kaltenbrunner began a survey of the complete occult infrastructure of the Reich. Perhaps he saw himself as an occult Speer, unifying and streamlining tangled bureaucracies for a final war effort. Or perhaps his motive was personal power or survival.

Whoever the spark and whatever the drive, Kaltenbrunner established something codenamed *Projekt Leo*. He sent an ambitious SD officer, Obersturmbannführer Werner Göttsch, to the Amt VII B library in the fall of 1943, with orders to collect the most important occult books and study them. Göttsch was an old SD hand, having run death-squads in pre-war Czechoslovakia and spy rings in the Balkans; his adjutant Sturmbannführer Hans Richter had run the Masonic section of Amt VII B since 1936. In January 1944 Richter removed 8,000 books and 24,000 periodicals (including some from the Ahnenerbe library and Sonderauftrag H) to Niemes Castle in the Sudetenland. (Some of the *Projekt Leo* collection included pornographic works, raising the possibility of Saturnian sex-magick as the group's methodology.) Göttsch carried a hundred of the most important tomes with him to Vienna for further study. Richter moved his operation to Neufalkenberg Castle in Pomerania that spring; in July, Kaltenbrunner added the Abwehr's library to the project. On May 1, 1945, Göttsch joined Kaltenbrunner and von Westarp at his superior's villa in Altaussee for a week, and met with Skorzeny on May 3, but whatever he brought was apparently insufficient. The Allies closed in and captured the Altaussee

coven; Kaltenbrunner was hanged at Nuremberg on October 15.

Karl Wolff (third from right) worked well with Reinhard Heydrich (1904–42; second from left) despite their entirely different approaches to the occult. This picture was taken in the spring of 1941 during a visit by Himmler and his top SS staff to Albert Speer, who had even less time for magical thinking than Heydrich. (INTERFOTO / Alamy)

Himmler did not approve of his subordinates getting along, preferring to play favorites to prevent alliances against him or his pet projects. With Heydrich dead, he promoted Ernst Kaltenbrunner (1903–46) to replace him and transferred Wolff to Italy. Kaltenbrunner (right) is shown here inspecting the concentration camp at Mauthausen in 1941. (©Ullstein Bild / TopFoto)

Werwolf

“God has given up the protection of the people … Satan has taken command … We Werewolves consider it our supreme duty to kill, to kill and to kill, employing every cunning and wile in the darkness of the night, crawling, groping through towns and villages, like wolves, noiselessly, mysteriously.”

– Josef Goebbels, April 18, 1945

Listeners might have been forgiven for imagining it to be a joke in particularly poor taste, even for the Nazis. On the morning of April 1, 1945, Radio Germany announced that it was, for the time being, Radio Werwolf, and that thousands of werewolves had begun to destroy the invading Allies, slaughtering soldiers and bombing tank convoys from the Rhine to the Oder. This, it turned out, was a slight exaggeration.

In September 1944, a tag-team of SS officials decided to take a leaf from their enemies’ book. Specialists had studied the French Resistance, Russian partisans, and Polish Home Guard with an eye toward creating similar organizations to attack the Allies as they pressed further into the Reich. Its manpower would come primarily from Hitler Youth, with some specially selected officers from the Waffen-SS and the Wehrmacht. Himmler tapped SS Obergruppenführer Hans-Adolf Prützmann to head this group, known as “Werwolf” – under the auspices not of the Waffen-SS, but of the SS regional police inspectorate. Although many other factors eventually drove the Werwolf groups from organized partisan activity into “death squad” type revenge-killings, this detachment from the regular armed forces set the stage right from the first.

Cologne was a center of Nazi Werwolf resistance, both the human and lycanthropic sorts. On May 20, 1945 after an anti-fascist riot nearly ended in bloodshed, five of Skorzeny's "Division Lüneburg" *Wolfen* ambushed an American Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives (MFAA) team (most likely actually working for the Inquiry Group within the OSS) in Lehrichstrasse northwest of the Cathedral. In the two-minute action, the Americans lost three men killed and two seriously wounded. Since Cologne was in the British zone of occupation, the U.S. Army was unable to mount an operation to pursue the attackers or recover the unknown cargo captured in the raid.

This 1512 woodcut by the German artist Lucas Cranach the Elder depicts the standard early modern view of werewolves: that they were human wretches deluded by Satan or an imbalance of melancholic humors into believing themselves wolves. However, by the 17th century, German scholars and jurists were reporting bestial, man-eating figures such as the sheep-mutilator Peter of Dalheim in 1581, the mass murderer Peter Stubbe of Bedburg executed in 1589, a pack of werewolves haunting Greifswald in 1640, another pack reported from the Palatinate in 1663, and the Ansbach werewolf of 1685 thought to be the town's mayor. (The Art Archive / Alamy)

The Werwolf's best-known action, Operation *Carnival* on March 25, 1945, resulted in the successful assassination of Dr. Franz Oppenhoff, the American-appointed mayor of Aachen, but depended upon Otto Skorzeny's SS commandos rather than Werwolf recruits for cadre and support. Skorzeny, Bormann, Schellenberg, Kaltenbrunner, Goebbels, and other top Nazis all attempted to hijack Werwolf for their own empire-building purposes, which (along with the rapid Allied advance and Prützmann's lack of organization) rapidly turned the Werwolf group into an uncoordinated morass of small-unit guerrilla teams and so-called "Vehme" death-squads to execute "traitors to the Reich."

Beneath the Skin

Beneath these flurries of insurgent activity and bunker politics, the real werewolves of the SS carried out their own missions. Himmler, fascinated by the Icelandic sagas about wolf-men, demanded his occultists produce them. Ahnenerbe research in the 1930s, and the work of Herbert Jankuhn in the Ukraine, had pinpointed bloodlines descended from the ancient Neurians, a Scythian tribe identified by Herodotus as becoming wolves every year. Sonderauftrag H had a complete dossier on the lycanthropic Benandanti of Croatia, Friuli, and Lithuania; their descendants likewise had been located. The significantly named Monsignor Comte Mayol de Lupé, chaplain of the Charlemagne Division of the SS, opened his castle to the Ahnenerbe in 1943 for further research into his own family background. Ernst Schaefer contributed specimens of the night-blooming *Mariphasa lumina* flower harvested from Tibet, reported to control lycanthropy. But even such material and intellectual resources produced no real results.

As part of his policy of misdirection, Skorzeny used the badge of the Weimar-era Wehrwolf Bund for some of his Werwolf fighters, both human and lycanthropic. This applique skull and crossbones features a scarlet W, a popular symbol for Werwolf protest graffiti, along with the *Wolfsangel* (wolf-hook) resembling a narrow, backward letter "Z." Another common Werwolf graffito was "the sign of the dark man," the shadowy figure of a man in a slouch hat, stenciled in black to indicate that the Werwolves were always watching from the shadows. Skorzeny or his *Hexensoldat* advisers may have picked the image for its resonance with the Black Man of the ancient witch cults. (INTERFOTO / Alamy**)**

It was the Japanese Ryokuryūkai – specifically its *Mireniamu* project – that cracked the lycanthropic code. Folklorist Kubodera Itsuhiko applied the de Lupé data and his own theozoological insights to the rituals described by Herodotus and repeated in Sonderauftrag H's witch-trial testimony. Using as test subjects pure-blooded Ainu, according to Japanese legend descended from the wolf goddess, Unit 731 biologist Masaji Kitano managed to develop a regimen of injections and meditation that would reliably awaken the lupine nature of those with the correct blood. The Ryokuryūkai exchanged the

Mireniamu data for nuclear material in March of 1945, and the Reich had true werewolves at last.

Otto Skorzeny controlled the actual lycanthropic operations of Werwolf, concealing them under the same code name as the feckless resistance movement. For extra confusion, he placed his shapeshifters in a nominal "Division Lüneburg," named for the setting of Hermann Löns' best-selling 1910 novel about a German resistance movement: *Der Wehrwolf*. However named or spelled, the job of the true Werwolf was to cover up Ahnenerbe research, move archives and artifacts to pre-placed locations in the Bavarian Alps, and block and harass American Operation *Paperclip* and British Operation *Surgeon* scientific assessment and recruitment teams long enough to get the core of the Nazi occult apparat safely out of Germany.

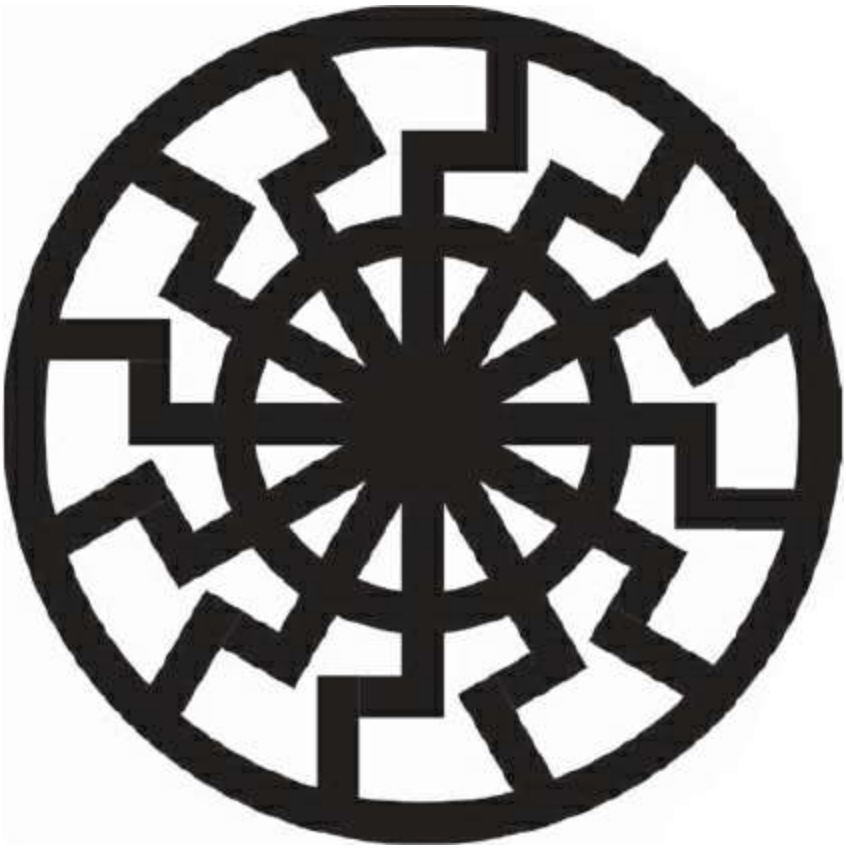
Black Sun and Fourth Reich

“The German submarine fleet is proud of having built for the Führer, in another part of the world, a Shangri-La on land, an impregnable fortress.”

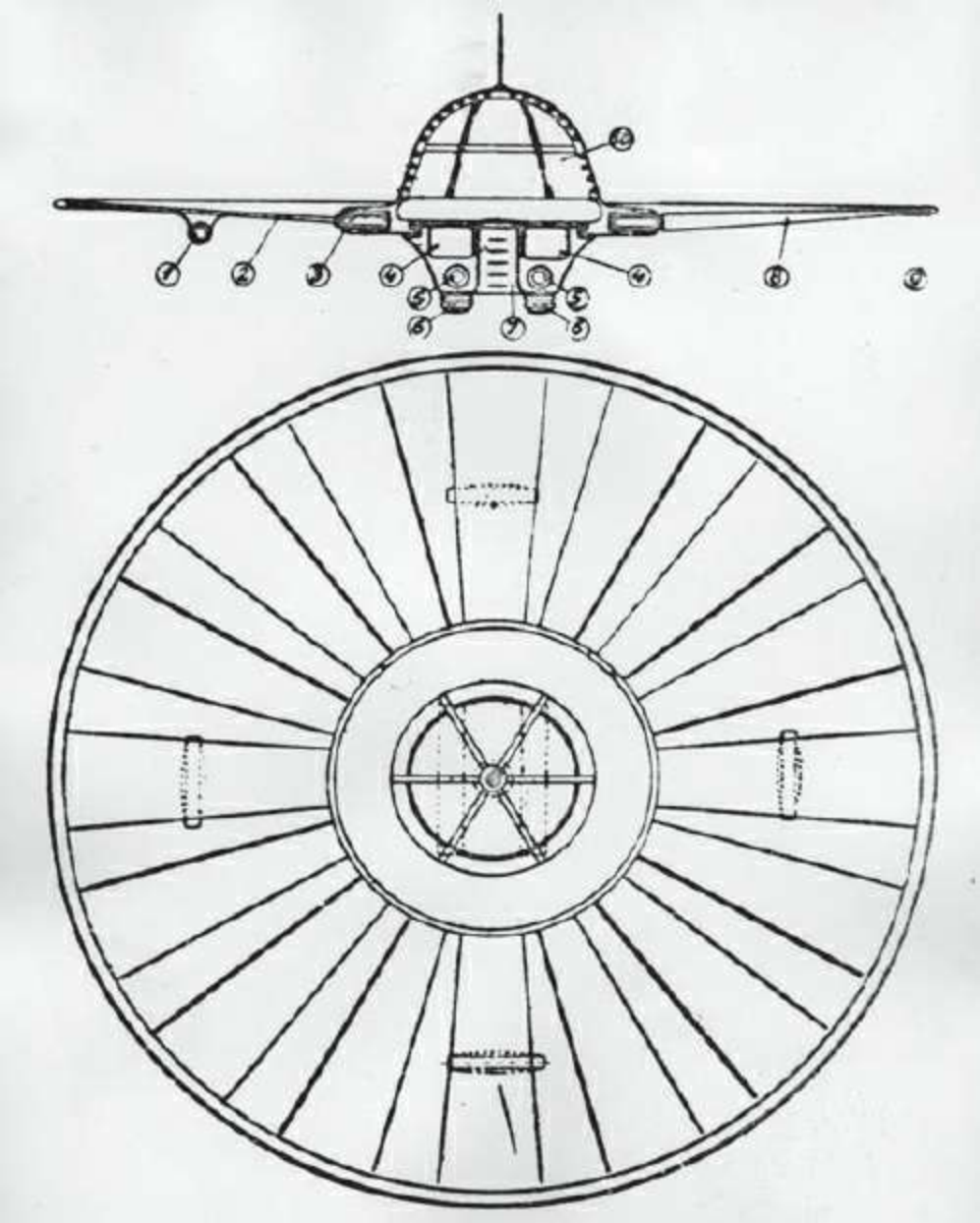
– Grossadmiral Karl Dönitz, 1943

On July 10, 1945, the war in Europe had been over for two months. Hitler had committed suicide on *Walpurgisnacht,* one final sacrifice to the dark gods of Thule. But below the surface, the currents of vril and sorcery still flowed. Himmler’s disgraced shaman, Karl-Maria Wiligut, had spoken of a “burnt sun” called Santur, the true source of Thule’s power. He had encoded it in the floor at Wewelsburg Castle, in the form of a black sun with 12 rays, composed of three overlapping swastikas: rising, setting, and zenith. This Black Sun, Wiligut had prophesied, would rise again.

That cold July day, what rose off the coast of Argentina was a Type IXC/40 submarine, the U-530. Its men wore no identification, and its captain, Oberleutnant Otto Wermuth, had thrown his logbook overboard. He gave no explanation for his boat’s disappearance, and no account of his whereabouts for two months. Five weeks later, on August 17, another U-boat arrived in the Mar del Plata. The U-977 also carried no logbook, and at least 16 crew members were missing. Oberleutnant Heinz Schäffer claimed he had dropped them off in Norway and then sailed straight to Argentina, submerged the entire time. In all, 55 German submarines were listed as “missing” after the war, a hidden armada for the Black Sun.



The Black Sun designed by Wiligut for the Generals' Hall at Wewelsburg. It resembles a design seen on brooches worn around AD 400 by the Alemanni, a Germanic tribe, and studied by the Ahnenerbe in the early 1930s. It also evokes the 15th-century *sol niger*, the symbol of the first stage of alchemy, indicating the preparation by destruction necessary for the Great Work to commence. The "Panbabylonians" consulted by the Vril-Gesellschaft and cited by Hermann Wirth would identify it with the invisible starlight commanded by Ishtar, often thought to be a reference to the hidden eighth star in the Pleiades. (Ratatosk under the Share Alike creative commons license)



Rudolf Schriever's schematic for the Flügelrad II; the final BMW design, essentially a jet-driven autogyro, was a compromise with the more-stable vane blades developed by Klaus Habermohl. The Flügelrad II only flew once, in a brief level-flight test in Prague in April 1945; the fate of the prototype is unknown. It might have been disassembled for parts or materials, destroyed intentionally, or captured by the Russians. (INTERFOTO / Alamy)

Projekt Saucer

Other craft never made it onto the registry in the first place. In August 1943

the architect of the SS Building and Works Program, Brigadeführer Dr. Ing. Hans Kammler, assumed control of secret weapons production; his concentration camps held desperately needed labor for the various projects. A year later, promoted to *Gruppenführer*, Kammler took control of all secret weapons development also. Himmler fed Kammler specialists from the Ahnenerbe's scientific institutes, and placed SS E-IV under his control in February 1945. By March 1945 SS Obergruppenführer Kammler controlled the development, production, and deployment of all rockets, jets, and experimental aircraft in the Third Reich. His "Kammlerstab" of esoteric and technical experts tucked away in the Skoda Works had free reign to build anything they could design – and dictatorial power over the last remaining industrial center of the Reich.

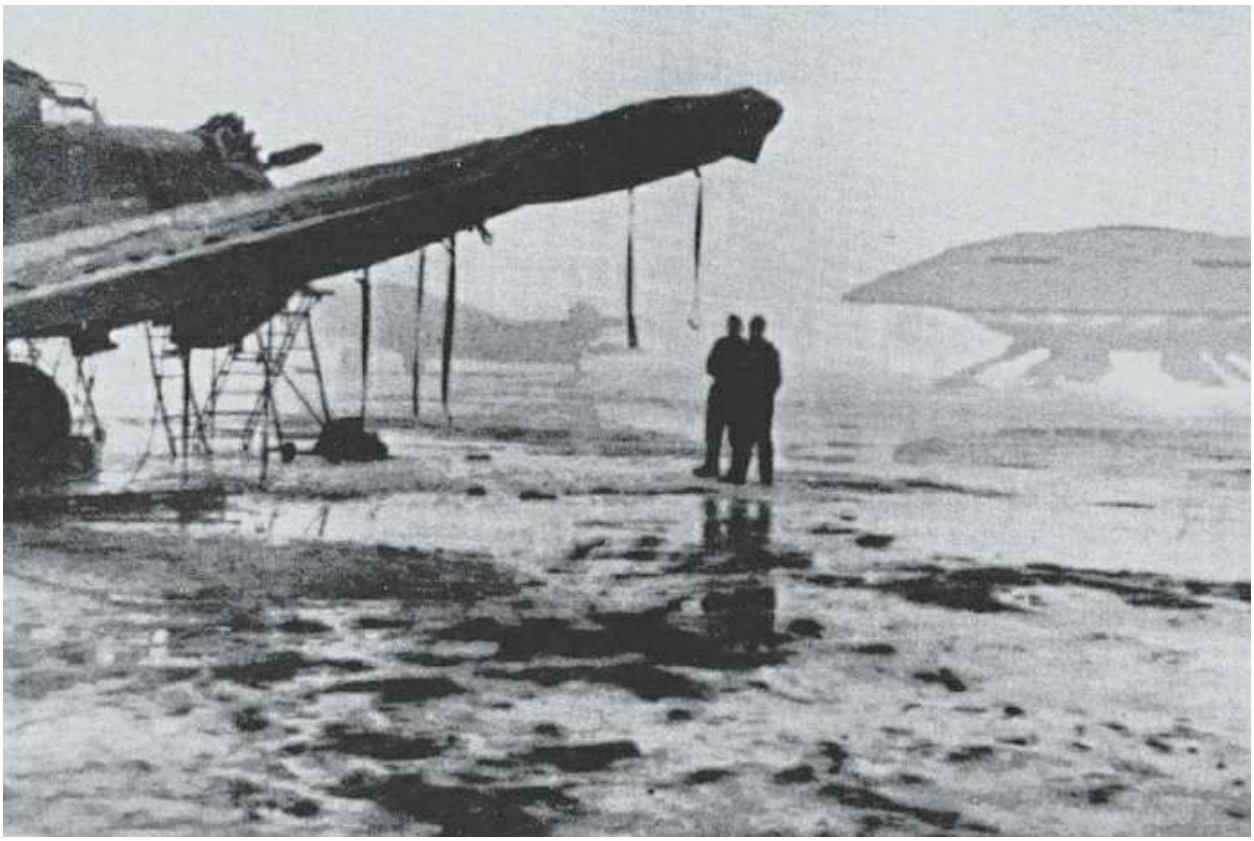
Even in 1943, Kammler had green-lit the development of *Feuerball* (Fireball), an electrostatic weapon system designed to interfere with Allied radar and bomber controls. These glowing disk-shaped drones, called "foo fighters" by American pilots, lifted using a modified dielectric effect. They proved too expensive to mass-produce and almost impossible to control: after a wave of tests from October 1944 to February 1945, *Feuerball* was abandoned. In August 1944, Kammler's team started a parallel design called *Flügelrad* (Flying Wheel), aimed at upsizing the electrostatic disk to accommodate a pilot and more conventional armament. Dr. Richard Miethe built a jet-powered *Flügelrad* outside Breslau, but it never flew: the Russians captured his facilities in March 1945. By that time, Rudolf Schriever and Klaus Habermohl had completed their "flying turbine" Flügelrad II in Prague, and were well underway with the larger Flügelrad III. But on February 10, 1945, just before Flügelrad II's test flight, Kammler received a briefing as new director of SS E-IV that changed his approach: he found out about vril.

The *Vimana* Connection

While Pascual Jordan slowly crafted the Bell at the Wenceslas Mine, other SS E-IV teams drove their own investigations forward. Alchemical research at Siemens had developed *Luftschwamm*, a light, strong alloy similar to bronze that conducted vril. Viktor Schauberger's "Repulsine" implosion turbine had destroyed several under-engineered Heinkel bomber prototypes, and he was working on a more robust prototype in Vienna. On the ley nexus and old Templar stronghold of Bornholm in the Baltic, Karl Schappeller

studied vril under the cover of nuclear research, and Maria Orsic channeled an Agarthan version of the *Vaimānika Shāstra*, the ancient Sanskrit text concerning the construction of *vimanas*, the legendary flying chariots of Vedic lore.

The engineer Georg Otto Erb combined all these research streams into a single design: the *Haunebu*, a bell-shaped aircraft built of *Luftschwamm*, with a Repulsine engine powered by vril. He even adapted the *Feuerball* weapons system: fired and controlled from the *Haunebu*, it could reliably hit and bring down an aircraft. When Kammler learned of Erb's design, he ordered production stopped on all but the Flügelrad III, which still mounted heavier weapons than the *Haunebu*. He also put Erb, Miethe, and Habermohl on the task of designing and building a heavy, long-range saucer craft. Code-named "Dora," it used the same fuel as the Bell's control system: Xerum 525, a glowing violet mercury compound similar to the red mercury Soviet alchemical technology would produce in the 1980s. Dora would be Kammler's escape hatch: the Allies were too close, and he had too little time to mass-produce enough vril craft to halt their offensive.



This newly discovered photo most likely depicts Kammler's saucer fleet

preparing its final evacuation from an airfield somewhere in Silesia or the Sudetenland. Dora is visible in the right background, which rules out Norway or Point 103 as the location of this image. The aircraft in the left background is probably a Junkers Ju 52 transport, making it unlikely to be an image from the Antarctic refuge surreptitiously taken by one of Byrd's men, as has been theorized. (Dale O'Dell / Alamy)

Rat Lines

What Himmler and even Kammler could not accomplish, the Allies had. The Nazi occult infrastructure was unified on one goal: escape. Karl Wolff cut a deal with the Americans, surrendering Italy in exchange for a certain number of "free passes" for key Ahnenerbe personnel. Skorzeny's ODESSA "underground railroad" for SS war criminals also shipped his remaining werewolves and Sonderverband Z *Hexensoldaten* through Italy and Spain, into Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay. Kammler's saucer squadron flew to Norway, and thence to Point 103, a secret base in the Arctic prepared by the MFA. Kammler himself took off in Dora's maiden voyage, landed at the secret airfield in the Sahara laid out by Almásy in 1944, evacuated its elite crew of pilots, and continued southward.

Artifacts disappeared also. Conrad Buch carried the Grail out on U-977; the Agarthan *phurba* simply vanished. Lieutenant Walter Horn discovered the Spear of Destiny in Nuremberg on August 5, 1945, and the US government returned it to Vienna in 1946 – unless the duplicate spear Himmler made for Wewelsburg was the real spear. Or the Americans made their own duplicate, removing the true spear to be concealed in the foundations of the under-construction Pentagon. A prototype Junkers Ju 390 codenamed "the Truck" flew the Bell to Angola, refueled and lifted off for points farther south.

The Antarctic Refuge

In December 1938, a freighter under the command of Kapitän Alfred Ritscher left Hamburg for Antarctica on a secret mission. Equipped with two Dornier Wal seaplanes, his German Antarctic Expedition surveyed over 200,000 square miles of frozen landscape, dropping finned metal swastika markers along the boundaries to literally "stake a claim" to the territory Ritscher named Neuschwabenland. Ahnenerbe specialists on the voyage captured

penguins, planted experimental seeds, and surveyed the landscape for pockets of vril or vortices of ley energy. Upon Ritscher's return in April 1939, the Ahnenerbe began planning an invulnerable refuge in the icy south where the surveys had detected an enormous ice cavern over geothermally heated lakes.

During the war, both the Ahnenerbe and the MFA devoted what resources they could to Point 211, as the refuge was code-named. By spring of 1945, Point 211 contained airfields and submarine pens, vaults full of food and oil, and stockpiles of weapons. A functioning prototype of the Elemag "Thorshammer" device that suppressed electromagnetism by destroying the atmosphere was too dangerous for even Himmler to deploy; the Marconi microwave death-ray was slower and far more expensive than regular artillery. During 1946, Kammler expanded the colony; thousands of former Nazis made their way to Neuschwabenland, and the freighter *Sankt Pauli* shipped the crew and facilities of the now-disassembled Point 103 south along with the *Flügelrad* and *Haunebu* squadrons.

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Operation *Highjump,* commanded by Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd, was a probing raid against Point 211, the Nazi Refuge in Antarctica, under the cover of a combined training exercise and aerial survey of Antarctica. Byrd's force, TF 68, comprised 13 ships, including the amphibious command ship USS *Mount Olympus,* the destroyers USS *Brownson* and USS *Henderson,* the submarine USS *Sennet,* and the flagship, the aircraft carrier USS *Philippine Sea.* For operational security, the ships left U.S. ports in several task forces during November and December 1946; the *Philippine Sea* didn't depart Norfolk until January 2. Its complement included an air wing of 12 F8F Bearcat fighters, secretly loaded in Cuba. The bulk of TF 68 reached three points around Antarctica in late December 1946. Screening Nazi U-boats trapped the *Sennet* under an iceberg; it withdrew to Scott Island in early January.

On February 6, 1947, the Nazi saucer fleet attacked Byrd's Central Group several hundred miles from Point 211. After shooting down seven Bearcats, the Nazi squadron attacked the fleet, damaging the *Mount Olympus* as well as the cargo vessels USS *Yancey* and USS *Merrick.* This illustration depicts the *Haunebu* (a name taken from its cover designation *"Hauneburg Industrie-Projekt")* armed with the *Feuerball* electrical weapon system and Flügelrad III (mounting an improved version of the vortex gun) clearing the American fighters from the Antarctic skies. The Dora command craft mounts conventional 30mm cannon; none of the saucer craft carried weapons capable of sinking a ship, however, and their bronze alloy *Luftschwamm* skin proved vulnerable to concentrated fire. Nevertheless, having lost air superiority, Byrd was forced to withdraw.

On February 23, 1947, the icebreaker USS *Burton Island* evacuated all American personnel from the Little America base in Antarctica; the early onset of winter was the official explanation for the early end of *Highjump.* When he arrived in Chile, Byrd gave an interview to the INS, which quoted him in the Chilean newspaper *El Mercurio* as urging that "the United States should adopt measures of protection against the possibility of an invasion of the country by hostile planes coming from the polar regions. … The cruel reality is that in case of a new war, the United States could be attacked by planes flying over one or both poles." He continued, "I have to warn my compatriots that the time has ended when we were able to take refuge in our isolation and rely on the certainty that the distances, the oceans, and the poles were a guarantee of

safety.”

Eventually, the Allies found them. MS and the Inquiry Group had joined forces during the war as Supreme Allied Command: Shadow Theater, and SAC:ST knew how to follow the clues in thousands of debriefings and hundreds of black sites slowly coming to light in the ruins of Germany. In November 1946, the US Navy launched Operation *Highjump*, ostensibly a peaceful exploration of the Antarctic Ocean. In actuality a probing raid, it ended in the defeat of the American task force. Before a select SAC:ST evaluation team called the Majestic Group, Reichsführer Kammler and Karl Schappeller demonstrated the potential of the now vril-powered Thorshammer: complete destruction of the atmosphere. The Majestic team recommended that Truman accept an armistice for the time being, while working to develop Allied esoteric capacity on a crash basis.

The surface war against the Third Reich was over. The occult war against the Fourth Reich had just begun.

Further Reading, Watching, and Gaming

This list is designed as an overview and introduction to the rich history and legendry of the Nazi occult, rather than as a complete compendium.

Books

Farrell, Joseph P., *Reich of the Black Sun* (Adventures Unlimited Press, Kempton, IL, 2005). Manages to combine Nazi paraphysics, alchemy, the Antarctic refuge, and UFOs into a barely unified field theory.

Goodrick-Clarke, Nicholas, *The Occult Roots of Nazism* (I.B. Tauris & Co, London, 2004). Oxford historian examines the solid historical record of German occult beliefs and societies, and their links with the Nazi Party.

Levenda, Peter, *Unholy Alliance* (Continuum, New York, 2002). New York occultist offers a freewheeling history of Nazi occultism, from the Ahnenerbe on down.

Pringle, Heather, *The Master Plan* (Hyperion Books, New York, 2006). Factual history of the Ahnenerbe; the first such work in English.

Stevens, Henry, *Hitler's Flying Saucers* (Adventures Unlimited Press, Kempton, IL, 2002). Complete and credulous compendium of Nazi UFOs.

Comics

Captain Gravity and the Power of the Vril by Joshua Dysart and Sal Velluto. African-American Hollywood super-hero battles Nazi magicians!

Hellboy by Mike Mignola. Born of a failed Nazi ritual, Mignola's hero battles Nazi occultists, Nazi war-apes, and other monsters.

Luftwaffe 1946 by Ted Nomura. This alternate-history comics series focuses on aerial combat and "Good German" angst, but features beautifully drawn experimental aircraft including those of *Projekt Saucer*.

Games

GURPS WWII: Weird War II by Steve Jackson Games. Compendium of weirdness for tabletop role-playing games, encompassing not just the occult but alternate histories, conspiracies, giant monsters, superheroes, and unbuilt wonder-weapons.

Hard Vacuum by Fat Messiah Games. Tabletop wargame simulates battles against spacegoing Nazis.

Return to Castle Wolfenstein by Gray Matter Interactive. Sequel to the classic first-person shooter dials up the Nazi occultism to maximum.

Weird Wars: Weird War II by Pinnacle Entertainment. Tabletop role-playing sourcebook for a secret war against monsters, evil magicians, and killer robots on all fronts.

Movies

Fullmetal Alchemist the Movie: Conqueror of Shamballa (2005). The Thule Society stars as the villains of this anime extravaganza.

Invincible (2002). Werner Herzog directed this film about a Jewish strongman featuring Erik Jan Hanussen and the hot-house carnival atmosphere of Weimar.

Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981) and *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989). Steven Spielberg and George Lucas mainstream and perfect the Nazi occult adventure subgenre in these two films.

Glossary

Agartha: Secret underground kingdom beneath Asia allied to the Third Reich; it is ruled by the King of the World.

Ahnenerbe: SS research organization for study of Germany's "ancestral heritage," especially its occult, racial, or para-scientific aspects.

Ariosophy: Specifically Aryan interpretation of theosophy focused on Teutonic paganism, rune lore, and the race-consciousness of the German people.

Armanenschaft: According to Guido von List, the elite, totalitarian sorcerer-priest caste of the ancient German people.

Artamanen: Back-to-the-land movement current in Germany in the 1920s, combining nature appreciation, agronomy, and defense of the country against Slavic incursions.

Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg: Reichsleiter Rosenberg Taskforce (ERR); organization officially tasked with confiscation of all artistic and cultural material from the occupied territories.

Externsteine: Natural stone formation revealed by Wiligut as the sacred center of the Irminist faith; magical proving ground for Ahnenerbe.

Feuerball: Fireball; German name for the "foo fighter" program of electrostatic interceptors.

Fraternitas Saturnii: Brotherhood of Saturn; ritual sex-magick lodge founded in 1928 by Eugen Grosche; suppressed by the Gestapo in 1936.

Germanenorden: German Order; elite quasi-Masonic *völkisch* order founded in 1912 to work for unification of all German territories and promote anti-Semitism.

Geweckt: Literally "awakened" or "illuminated"; term in Sonderverband Z for a soldier who had encountered the supernatural.

Haunebu: Vril-powered experimental aircraft.

Hexensoldat: "Witch-soldier," a colloquial term for magically trained military personnel.

Irminsul: Legendary pillar worshiped by the pagan Saxons; badge issued to Ahnenerbe survivors of exercises at Externsteine.

(das) Laternenträger Projekt: Project Lantern-Bearer; SS project to construct a vril reactor on the pattern of a Lemurian bell; also called *die Glocke*, "the Bell."

Leuchtendeloge: Luminous Lodge; esoteric lodge founded in 1925 to study the vril.

Marineforschungsabteilung: Naval Research Institute (MFA); special occult research unit set up within the Abwehr (later under the Kriegsmarine) initially for purposes of "unconventional reconnaissance."

Mireniamu: Japanese project to develop werewolves and other supernatural beings.

Order of the New Templars (ONT): Knightly and occult order founded by Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels for the renewal of the German nation and race.

Organisation Consul (OC): "Vehme" death-squad run by underground members of the Ehrhardt Brigade of the Freikorps.

Raumenergie: "Space-energy" similar to ether or zero-point energy; the cover term used for vril in official papers of the SS technical development staff.

RSHA Amt VII B: Office within RSHA (Reichssicherheitshauptamt, or Reich Security Main Office) tasked with maintaining a complete library and archive of "hostile ideological" material, including Masonic, Jewish, and occult lore.

Ryokuryūkai: Green Dragon Society; the Japanese equivalent of the Ahnenerbe operating under the umbrella of the Japanese Navy.

Sonderauftrag H: Special Commission H; the office within RSHA Amt VII B devoted to assembling a complete record of witchcraft trials in Germany.

Sonderverband Z: Special Group Z; military unit associated with the Ahnenerbe; tasked with occult warfare operations.

SAC:ST: Supreme Allied Headquaters: Shadow Theatre, the division of the Allied military set up specifically to combat Axis occult programs.

SS Entwicklungsstelle-IV (SS E-IV): SS directorate for alternative technical research.

Theosophy: System of esoteric knowledge drawing on both religion (primarily Hinduism) and science (primarily quasi-Darwinism) to elaborate a unified theory of human development both spiritually and

physically.

Thule Gesellschaft: Recruiting movement for the Germanenorden in Bavaria that developed into an esoteric political party.

Todesbruderschaft: Brotherhood of Death; institute of the Ahnenerbe concerned with necromancy.

Vehme: Medieval courts of justice administered by secret societies in Germany and Austria.

***Vimana**:* Flying chariot from Vedic mythology.

***Völkisch**:* German term meaning "ethnic," "folkloric," and "populist," applied to various occult political and cultural movements in Germany and Austria between *c*. 1880 and 1940.

Vril: Fundamental cosmic force of the universe, both physical and metaphysical, unifying heat, gravity, and electromagnetism.

Vril-Gesellschaft: Term of convenience used to refer to the secret core behind several overlapping societies dedicated to the study, unlocking, and utilization of vril.

Wahrheitsgesellschaft: Society of Truth; an esoteric study group devoted to the search for vril.

***Welteislehre**:* World-Ice Theory; the catastrophist belief in a series of icy explosions that defines the creation of the solar system and the continuing development of Earth and its moons.

Werwolf: Both a last-ditch insurgent network in the final days of Nazi Germany and a secret program of lycanthropic covert operatives.